FAMILY PRAYERS

AND

PRAYERS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, ETC.

BY THE LATE

HENRY THORNTON, M. P.

EDITED BY

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE present Volume contains two works, which have been separately published in England; the Family Commentary upon the Sermon on the Mount having appeared there, about a year after the first edition of the Family Prayers. The arrangement now adopted will, it is thought, be found convenient for domestic worship; as combining within the same volume a Manual of prayer, and portions of scriptural exposition for reading.

It may seem presumptuous in the Editor to say any thing by way of introduction, to productions bearing on their title-page the name of THORNTON;—a name, familiar not to England only, but to the world; and indissolubly associated with our thoughts of whatever is enlarged in Christian beneficence, sound in religious views, and beautiful in consistency of daily practice. He will take the liberty, however, of simply saying, in regard to the Family Prayers, that, without at all detracting from the merit of other works of the same description, they appear to him to preserve, in a remarkable degree, the difficult and happy medium between verboseness on the one hand, and a cold concise

ness on the other. It is believed that none can use them, without feeling that they impart a spirit of gratitude and self-humiliation. They are what prayers should be,—fervent, and yet perfectly simple.

He would beg the indulgence of saying also, that he has seldom read any work of a purely practical character, with more delight and instruction, than the Commentary upon the Sermon on the Mount. It is remarkable throughout for the profound insight into human nature which it manifests: for its clear exhibition of the fundamental truths of the gospel: and for the faithfulness, honesty, and, at the same time, the true refinement and dignity, of the language in which its instructions are conveyed.

The Editor cannot but indulge the confident belief, that the publication of these two works, in this united form, will be a rich spiritual benefit to the community May God graciously add his blessing!

MANTON EASTBURN.

New York, *December*, 1836.

PREFACE.

THE following Prayers were prepared by the late Mr. Henry Thornton, for the use of his own family. Many of those, who, in his lifetime, were admitted to hear them in that circle, and many of those, who have heard them since, within the same walls, have expressed a wish, that the benefit, there enjoyed, might be more widely extended Copies were, therefore, sometimes given : and from one of these, carried to a distant dependency of the empire, an imperfect edition was printed. From that time, perhaps, all delicacy with respect to the publication of an authorized edition was removed.

Those, who are familiar with other manuals of devotion, may here occasionally find passages which are not new to them ; and may, indeed, recognise two* entire prayers, which, as specimens of family devotion, have already been published in another work, to which they were contributed, anonymously, by Mr. Henry Thornton. His object was not human praise : giving thus to the work of another,—or borrowing, here and there, a phrase or a sentence from elder divines to enrich his own collection of prayers,—his single aim was to promote the glory of GOD in the edification of His people ; providing, by these prayers, in the first place, for the household which Providence had united around him ; and endeavouring, in the second place, by the specimens of family prayers which have been already mentioned, to excite in others a taste for domestic worship, and to furnish some aid to them in its exercise.

* The first draughts of two or three others were contributed in the same manner to another work.

The world will be wiser and better, and therefore happier, in proportion as it shall imbibe the spirit of the life and of the prayers of Mr. Henry Thornton. Admirable as have been the examples of excellence which the present generation has been permitted to witness, there has not been perhaps one individual, in the whole number, who manifested in a more striking manner that combination of qualities, which constitutes Christian consistency. His piety was fervent, and yet sober; his liberality was magnificent, and yet discriminating; his charity was large, and yet not latitudinarian; his self-denial was rigorous, yet unobtrusive. At one time, there was some hope, that these principles—as embodied, by the grace of GOD, in his habitual conduct—might have been exhibited to the world by the hand of his dearest and most intimate friend: a life of HENRY THORNTON, by WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, would, indeed, have been a legacy of wisdom and piety, which would have enriched many generations. This hope, long cherished, is now finally lost: and the character of Mr. Henry Thornton must, perhaps, be left to be collected from his works;—his original and intellectual powers, from his Essay on Paper Credit, (the publication of which, as Dr. Miller observed in his Philosophy of History, forms an epoch in the history of the science to which it belongs;)—his views of religion, from the prayers now published,—and from some practical Commentaries on the Old and New Testament, portions of which (complete, though not intended for publication) are now in the press. These, indeed, like the present volume, he drew up for the use of his own family: but it is hoped that both the Prayers and the Commentaries, while they contribute to illustrate the character of their author, (an object which he certainly never contemplated,) will, also, by the Divine blessing, promote, after his death, the great designs of his life,—the good of his fellow-creatures, and the glory of GOD.

R. H. I.

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FAMILY PRAYERS.

OUR FATHER, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven: Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

THE grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the fellowship of the HOLY GHOST, be with us all, evermore. *Amen.*

FAMILY PRAYERS.

FIRST MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, who art the Creator and the Governor of the world, and hast abundantly provided for the various wants of Thy creatures; who hast ordered the day and the night to succeed each other, and when Thou hast refreshed man with sleep, requirest him to pursue his work until the evening; who hast also ordained that he shall be born to trouble, and hast appointed the grave to be the end of all living; We thank Thee, that, while Thou hast thus placed our lot in this life, Thou hast not left us without hope in that world which is to come. We adore Thee for the gift of Jesus Christ Thy Son, by whose Gospel life and immortality are brought to light, and we are fully instructed in all those things which concern our salvation. We bless Thee for the pardon of sin, through faith in a Redeemer; for the guidance of Thy providence; and for the consolations of Thy Spirit. We thank Thee for Thy holy sabbaths; for Thy written word; and for all the other means of grace, which Thou hast entrusted to us.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may this day pursue, with fidelity and diligence, that work which Thou hast assigned to us; and that we may, at the same time,

maintain a spiritual and heavenly mind. In the midst of life we are in death; O let us remember this awful truth; and let us live this day as we shall wish that we had done, if it should, indeed, prove our last. Save us from the sins to which we are most prone. Leave us not to the natural dispositions of our own minds, which are ever inclining us to evil; but put Thy Spirit within us, and teach us to cultivate every Christian temper, and to abound in every good work. Strengthen our faith in the glorious promises of the Gospel; and fill us with that joy and peace in believing, which shall be more than a compensation for all the temporal sacrifices to which we may be called. Dispose us to bear affliction with a patient and quiet mind; or, if Thou shouldest continue to us prosperity, to be ever watchful over ourselves, and moderate in our enjoyments; and let us impart freely to others the good gifts which Thou showerest down upon us. Inspire us with zeal in the fulfilment of our relative duties; with integrity in our dealings; and the spirit of kindness to all men. Let us continually examine ourselves; and, advancing in self-knowledge, let us prevail over our several infirmities. Let us grow in grace, and in all goodness, and in meetness for Thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray for Thy blessing on all our friends and relations: may they also be filled with the knowledge of Thy will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; and may we, and they, be of one heart, and one mind, loving each other as brethren in Christ, and uniting our endeavours to promote both the good of all men and Thy glory.

Have mercy on the poor and the afflicted—strengthen the weak—succour the tempted—and guide the ignorant into the way of knowledge.

Bless the rising generation; save them from the dangers of this evil world; sanctify to them the events which shall befal them; make them instruments in Thy hand for the advancement of the interests of Thy Church on earth, and members of Thy blessed family in heaven.

We offer these our humble and imperfect prayers in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SECOND MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND ETERNAL GOD, our Creator and Preserver, and continual Benefactor, we desire to begin this day with the acknowledgment of Thy power and goodness, and of our obligation to love and serve Thee: and we beseech Thee to grant us grace to pass the whole of it in Thy fear, and in the fulfilment of Thy commandments.

Thou hast appointed to each of us our work in life: O LORD, enable us diligently to perform our respective duties. Let us not waste our time in unprofitableness or idleness; nor be unfaithful to any trust committed to

us. Let us not put on the mere appearance of goodness; nor endeavour in any respect to deceive those around us. but let us remember, that Thine eye is upon us; and let us have the testimony of our consciences, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have our conversation in the world. Let truth be ever on our lips. Let us be examples of all integrity and uprightness. Help us, also, to perform a kind and Christian part towards those who may come under our influence. May we labour to do them service; and may we continually deny ourselves, that we may the more effectually and abundantly minister to the various wants of others. May we rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep; and be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.

We also beseech Thee to give us patience to bear the several trials and vicissitudes of life, with an equal and contented mind. Let us not be perplexed with the cares of this world; nor overwhelmed with unnecessary fears; but let us ever trust Thy gracious providence, and hope in Thy goodness and mercy.

Give to us, when we are in prosperity, a spirit of moderation and sobriety. Save us from pride, and from self-indulgence. Deliver us from the too great love of earthly things; and teach us to remember, that it is Thou who givest us all things richly to enjoy.

Bless unto us the afflictive circumstances through which we may pass. May we see Thy hand in all Thy various dispensations; and adore Thee for the several events of Thy providence, knowing that, if we truly

love and serve Thee, all things shall work together for our good.

We commend to Thy kind and fatherly care all our friends and relations. Direct, O LORD, their steps in life; and bless them with all spiritual blessings in JESUS CHRIST. Vouchsafe unto them the pardon of their sins, and the blessed hope of eternal life.

We pray for the rising generation. May they remember their Creator in the days of their youth; and find Thee to be their refuge in all the scenes through which they pass.

Have mercy on all who are in any sorrow or trouble. Do Thou provide for them through the riches of Thy mercy, and send special help in their hour of need.

Be favourable to this nation. Bless the President of these United States,* and all who are in authority. Direct our counsellors. *Give wisdom to our Congress.* Inspire our magistrates with integrity; and our clergy with the spirit of true religion. Deliver us from the hands of all our enemies; and give us peace among ourselves.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

* In this passage, and others of a similar kind, the English edition has been altered, so as to apply to the form of government in this country.

O LORD, our Heavenly Father, most gracious and merciful GOD, who hast preserved us through all the stages of our past lives, and hast blessed us with unnumbered benefits, being never weary of doing us good, give us grace, we beseech Thee, most humbly and heartily to thank Thee for all thy loving-kindness vouchsafed unto us; and let us renew the solemn dedication of ourselves unto Thee.

We confess, before Thee, the sins of our lives, which are more than we can number or express. We lament the evil which, day by day, in thought, word, and deed, we have committed against Thee; and we adore the riches of that mercy which forgiveth all our sins, and healeth all our iniquities, and still aboundeth even unto us, who have so grievously rebelled against Thee.

We also pray, that while we rejoice in the thought of that exceeding goodness which is revealed in the Gospel to us sinners, we may be in all respects suitably impressed with the various doctrines of Thy word; and may bring forth all those fruits of righteousness which are, by JESUS CHRIST, to the praise and glory of Thy name.

We pray, that we may this day walk worthy of the Lord: that we may honour Thee by our patience under every trial; by our self-denial in the midst of our temptations; by our meekness under provocations; and by our unwearied zeal in doing good. We pray, that we may surrender up our wills to Thy most holy will in all

things; readily accommodating ourselves to every new circumstance, which Thou, in Thy providence, art pleased to send.

Grant that, through the daily contemplation of the doctrines of Thy Gospel, every good disposition may be formed in us. May the faith of Christ be made effectual to bring down our pride, to subdue our self ishness, to improve our temper, to direct and restrain our tongues, to animate us with the purest zeal, and to fill us with charity to our neighbour. May it, also, sanctify our daily work, furnishing the motive to it, exciting our diligence in it, and teaching us to look to Thee, O Lord, for our great and final reward. O God, bless us this day; and, not this day only, but to the end of our lives. Defend us in all our future dangers; succour us in all our sorrows and adversities; lead us through every difficulty and trial; and, when all the troubles of this mortal life shall be over, conduct us at length, in peace and safety to the haven of everlasting rest.

If it please Thee to send us prosperity, enable us to devote the good things, which Thou givest us, to Thy service; and as Thou extendest Thy mercies, do Thou enlarge, also, the thankfulness of our hearts. Or, if it be Thy righteous will either to try us with temptations, or to visit us with any sore afflictions, O may we learn to bow meekly to Thy gracious providence in al. things; and still to trust Thine unchanging purposes of mercy to us amidst all Thy various dispensations.

To Thee, O God, who hast been the support of our infancy, the help of our youth, and the guide of our

advancing years, do we commit ourselves for the days which are to come. Thy providence hath ordained our lot in life, and hath ordered hitherto all things concerning us. Unto Thee, the same gracious God, do we now resign all our affairs: to Thee do we commend our bodies and souls, our temporal as well as our eternal interests. Especially, we beseech Thee to save us from sin; as well as from those fears which our past transgressions might justly bring upon us.

We offer up these our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTH MORNING.

Almighty Lord, our God, whose eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good, and who seest not only our outward actions, but all our most secret thoughts, we pray Thee to maintain in us this day a constant sense of Thy presence, and to preserve us from sinning against Thee. We are exposed to dangers by night and by day; our lives are in Thy hands, and unto Thee do we look for preservation from every evil. O Lord, teach us to be ever mindful of Thee. When we go out and come in, and when we are alone and in company, may we bear in mind that Thou art contin-

nally with us, and that Thou takest account of all we think, and speak, and do.

We pray Thee, O merciful Father, to pardon our past sins, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. When we reflect how strict and holy is Thy law; and how often we have yielded to anger and passion, to pride and vanity, to negligence and indolence, or to the desire of some forbidden thing, we are filled with shame and confusion of face, on account of our many trespasses against Thee. But we desire to bless Thy holy name, that Thou hast not left us without hope; for Thou hast revealed Thyself to us, as pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, for the sake of Thy Son JESUS CHRIST. We therefore pray Thee now to receive us into Thy favour, and to make us all children of GOD by faith in JESUS CHRIST.

We draw near unto Thee, trusting in His name, and not in our own righteousness; and we also beseech Thee, for His sake, to strengthen our weakness, and to enable us this day to fulfil every duty to which we are called. May we be kind and affectionate, one to an other; sincere and upright in all our dealings, and diligent in our proper work. May we rejoice in every opportunity of doing good; and may we have grace to deny ourselves, that we may the more abundantly minister to the wants of others. Put into us a spirit of compassion for the poor, as well as of thankfulness to Thee, who hast made us to differ. Teach us to forgive those who have injured us; since we ourselves have so many sins for which we hope to be forgiven. Produce in us, O LORD, we beseech Thee, every Christian

grace. Raise us up to be instruments in Thy hand for the good of many: and, while we are serving our generation, may we be abundantly blessed in our own souls; and rejoice in the sense both of Thy pardoning mercy, and of Thy constant and special protection.

We pray thee, O LORD, to look down in compassion on all our dear friends and relations. Bestow upon them all things which Thou knowest to be needful for them. Sustain and comfort them in this life; but especially, vouchsafe unto them the blessings of the life to come.

Bless our President. Direct the public councils of the nation. Give success to every endeavour to relieve the oppressed, and to establish righteousness and peace on the earth.

Have mercy on the young. Grant that they may be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and may thus learn to do Thy will, and to walk in Thy fear, all the days of their lives; and to hand down Thy truth to the latest posterity.

O LORD, we beseech Thee to bring us all, by the multitude of Thy mercies, through this world of many temptations and trials, to that place of everlasting rest and peace, which Thou hast prepared for them who love Thee.

We offer up these our humble supplications, in the name and through the mediation of our Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTH MORNING.

O LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY, enable us, we beseech Thee, to call upon Thee with humble and devout hearts. Let us not mix any worldly or wandering thoughts with the supplications which we offer up unto Thee; but let us remember, that we are now in Thy presence; and let us worship Thee in spirit and in truth.

We thank Thee, O GOD, for Thy mercy to us during the past night. We bless Thee for our renewed health and strength; and for the various comforts by which we are surrounded. And we desire now to dedicate again to Thee all the faculties of our bodies and of our minds, and to spend the day, which is before us, to Thy glory.

Deliver us, O LORD, from all the temptations of the day. Help us to resist the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Let us not be drawn aside to any thing which is contrary to our Christian duty, either by the propensity to sin which is within us, or by the evil example of those around us; but let us watch and strive continually, that all our ways may be pleasing in Thy sight. We confess, that we are weak, and helpless, and laden with iniquity. But do Thou, for our merciful Saviour's sake, have compassion on our infirmities; and give us grace sufficient for us in every hour of our necessity. O LORD, grant that we may thus be preserved from sin; and, putting our trust in Thee, may not be confounded.

Give us faith in all the truths of Thy word; may we be daily warned by the terrors of the LORD, and invited

by Thy mercy. May we meditate on the awful punishments denounced against the wicked, and call to mind the reward which Thou hast promised unto those who please Thee by patient continuance in well-doing. And thus may we be prepared to make every sacrifice, to which Thou mayest be pleased to call us. May we cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, when Thou requirest us to do it. And may we consider all our interests in this life as of no value compared with the eternal welfare of our souls. May we seek first the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness; trusting that all things which are needful for the body shall be added unto us.

Pardon, O LORD, all our sins in time past; we pray for mercy, in the name of JESUS CHRIST; and we bless Thee for this great Mediator; in whom we would place all our confidence and hope.

We ask every blessing in the name of the same Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SIXTH MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, infinite in power, in goodness, and in mercy, help us now to worship Thee with reverence and humility. Before Thee the Angels veil their faces. May we, therefore, approach Thee with a deep sense of Thine awful Majesty, and of Thy spotless purity and holiness; and may we so address Thee that Thou mayest hear our prayers, and pour down Thy blessing upon us.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, to grant us this day Thy Holy Spirit; that we may be strengthened to fulfil our several duties, and to resist the temptations which may come upon us. We call upon Thee, in the name of Jesus Christ; through whom Thou vouchsafest strength to the weak, and suppliest all the spiritual wants of the soul. Have compassion upon us, for our Saviour's sake; and give us grace to do whatever Thou requirest of us. O cleanse us, for His sake, from the stain of every sin, from pride, and envy, and malice, and selfishness, and uncharitableness; and make us meek, and lowly, and gentle, and kind, and forgiving. Let us not live to please ourselves, or indulge any evil inclinations of our own hearts; but let us aim to glorify Thee, our God, and to do good in our generation. Thou hast appointed, unto each of us, our work in life. We pray, that we may have grace to fulfil, each of us, the duties of our several stations, with integrity and fidelity May we remember, that, this day, Thine eye is continually upon us; and, while we think of Thee, may we

put our cheerful trust in Thee, and commit all our ways unto Thee, and be found in the fear of the LORD all the day long.

We desire to acknowledge Thy various mercies to us. We bless Thee, that Thou coverest our table with plenty, that Thou makest us to abound with the good things of this life, and causest us to go out and come in, in safety. O LORD, help us to use, with moderation, the gifts which Thou bestowest; and to maintain, while we enjoy them, continual thankfulness of heart.

Especially, we bless Thee for Thy mercies in JESUS CHRIST; by whom we obtain pardon of sin, and the blessed hope of eternal life. We beseech Thee, for His sake, to give us a right understanding in all things; that we may know how to walk so as to please Thee, and how to avoid all that is hateful in Thy sight. Guide us in all difficulties; and strengthen us under all temptations; and supply Thou our spiritual, as well as temporal, wants, for Thy great mercy's sake in JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SEVENTH MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of another day, we pray Thee to conduct us through the same in peace; and to enable us so to pass all the time of our pilgrimage on earth, that when we go hence, we may be prepared to meet Thee in Thy heavenly kingdom. When we think of this life and its various temptations, when we look abroad, and behold the wickedness of the world, and then contemplate also the weakness and corruption of our nature, we might well sink through fear of the difficulties with which we have to struggle, and tremble lest we should fall under the power of our manifold temptations. But we bless Thee, O Lord, for that abundant grace which is treasured up for us in Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for all the motives, promises, and encouragements, afforded us in Thy gospel; and we would daily rejoice in it as the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth. We bless Thee, that Thy Son hath died a sacrifice for sin; and that the Spirit of Christ is sent to sanctify us. We, therefore, now pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit; that we may go forth to our daily occupations and trials, having the Lord for our righteousness and our strength.

Prepare us, we beseech Thee, for every duty of this day; arm us for every trial which may come upon us. Do thou sanctify us, O Lord, in body, soul, and spirit May we now seriously devote ourselves to Thee; and may we be found walking in Thy fear all the day long;

fulfilling, each of us, our proper work with Christian humility and simplicity. Deliver us from a careless and unbelieving life; from a life of idleness and unprofitableness, as well as of wickedness and vice. Save us from the sins which, in times past, may have most easily beset us; and from those temptations to which we may now, through our age and circumstances, be most exposed. May our hearts be occupied with love to Thee; and may all our faculties be so employed in doing good, that no place may be given for those temptations by which those who know not the gospel of their salvation are continually overcome.—And may Thy grace increase in us; and our corruptions be weakened, day by day: at the same time, forgetting the things which are behind, and looking forward to those things which are before, may we be pressing forward towards the mark of the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

We, also, beseech Thee to deliver us from every prejudice and error by which we may be in danger of being deceived. Save us from a blinded conscience, and a false and misguided zeal. Suffer not, that, through our fault, the way of truth should ever be evil-spoken of; and make us fearful lest we hinder the gospel of Christ

O Lord, help us also this day to remember, how short and uncertain is the time of our sojourning here on earth; so that, whatsoever our hands find to do, we may do it with all our might. May we fulfil, zealously the duties of our respective stations; and, at the same time, may we maintain a spiritual and heavenly mind. May we often think of that blessed region where Christ

sitteth at the right hand of God; and, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, may we do all to Thy glory.

We offer up these our humble and imperfect prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

EIGHTH MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, we pray Thee, now to deliver us from all wandering thoughts. Help us to remember in whose presence we are; and let us worship Thee in spirit and in truth.

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, who art the preserver of our lives and the giver of all the good things which we enjoy, we thank Thee for the mercies of the past night. We bless Thy name, that we are here met together in so much health and comfort: and that we have now the prospect of passing another day in the enjoyment of the bounties of Thy providence; while we have also set before us the blessed hope of everlasting life. We beseech Thee to give us this day grace to serve Thee in our several stations, and to walk according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Save us from the temptations of the day; strengthen us for the fulfilment of our duties; direct us in all our difficulties; and

comfort us under any trouble or adversity, into which we may this day come; and grant, that, when we lie down at night, we may be able to look back on the hours which shall have passed, with an humble confidence that Thou acceptest our services, and wilt pardon our infirmities, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

We beseech Thee to deliver us from all evil passions, from pride and envy, from hatred and ill-will, from censoriousness and uncharitableness; and, especially, from the want of Christian kindness towards those who dwell with us in the same family, and worship Thee, together, as partakers of the same faith. Preserve us, also, from those secret transgressions which Thine eye alone can discern in us. Deliver each of us from the sins which most easily beset us. O LORD, grant that Thy good Spirit may this day abide within us; and dispose us to every good work.

And help us also to call often to remembrance the great love of our LORD and SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST; who came down from heaven to die for us, that we, being delivered from the dread of Thy wrath, and rejoicing in the hope of Thy mercy, might serve Thee, day by day, in newness of life. O LORD, strengthen our faith in Him who hath suffered on the cross for us. Teach us to walk according to His example. May we, like Him, be kind and compassionate, forbearing and forgiving, holy and harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.

And bless us, not this day only, but to the end of our lives. We pray, that, so long as we remain in this world of trial, Thou wouldst strengthen us by Thy Holy

Spirit, and comfort us, and continually direct us. Suffer us not, at any time, to depart from Thee, who art our Father and our God, through any allurements of the world, or any temptations of the flesh, or of the Devil; but make us ever stedfast in Thy truth, and faithful to Thy cause, and devoted to Thy service.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers, in the name, and through the mediation, of our only Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

NINTH MORNING.

O God, who hast commanded us in Thy word to call upon Thy name, and hast declared that Thou hearest and answerest the prayers of those who make their supplications unto Thee, we desire now to offer up our petitions, under a deep sense of our unworthiness, and of Thy manifold and great mercies.

We bless Thee for Thy preservation of us during the past night; and we desire to acknowledge again our dependence upon Thee, and our unfeigned obligations towards Thee. We thank Thee for having poured down upon us so many blessings of this life: we thank Thee for our health, and strength; for our food, and raiment; and for all the comforts, and conveniences

which we enjoy. But, above all, we praise Thee for the inestimable privilege of being born in a land of religious light and knowledge. For these, and for all Thy various and great mercies, we would render unto Thee a grateful heart: and we would endeavour to show our gratitude, not with our lips only, but with our lives; by giving up ourselves to Thy service, and by walking before Thee, in holiness and righteousness, all our days on earth.

We now beseech Thee to enable us by Thy grace to pass the whole of this day, in Thy fear. May we employ ourselves in doing those things which become our station and circumstances: may we mortify all our corrupt affections: may we exercise ourselves in maintaining a conscience void of offence towards Thee, and towards all men: may we rise superior to our temptations; and, by Thy grace, prevail over our several infirmities.

We pray Thee, O Lord, to animate our minds by those glorious hopes which are set before us in Thy word; so that if we have any present sacrifices to make, they may seem small to us, in comparison of that inward satisfaction and joy, which the gospel gives in the midst of worldly disappointments. And, at the same time, deliver us from every false hope. May we examine well our title to Heaven, till we know that our foundation is sure, and shall never fail us. We confess that we are daily compassed with infirmity: but we pray, that every evil habit may be weakened in us that every temptation may, by degrees, be overcome and that every terror may at length be done away

May we thus be brought into the true liberty of the children of GOD; and serve Thee without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.

Hear, O LORD, these our prayers; and supply both our temporal and spiritual wants, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our blessed Saviour

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TENTH MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, we kneel down to thank Thee for Thy merciful care and protection during the past night; and we beseech Thee now to let Thy blessing rest upon us. Help us to begin the day with the solemn dedication of ourselves to Thy service: and then to go to the duties of our several stations; with an earnest desire to do every thing in Thy fear, and with a view to Thy glory.

We beseech Thee, O LORD, to establish us in the great doctrines of Thy Gospel; may we be grounded in the faith of CHRIST crucified for us: may that history which we read in Thy holy word, of our Saviour's coming down from heaven, to live as our example, and to die as the Atonement for our sins, affect us deeply, and have its full influence upon us: may it excite our warmest gratitude to Him who died for us: may it in

spire us with hatred against sin: may it elevate us above the fear of wicked men; and may we learn to take part with our suffering and despised Lord. May that zeal to save us, which He showed, awaken, in each of us, a concern for our own salvation; and may it be the chief desire of our hearts to be made partakers of all the benefits both of His death and of His glorious resurrection.

But since we are by nature so prone to evil, and so little disposed to spiritual things, we pray Thee, O GOD, to purify our minds from all sinful and vain desires, by the powerful efficacy of Thy grace. O LORD, grant unto us Thy Holy Spirit. May it dwell within us, as a spirit of purity and holiness, a spirit of truth and of wisdom, of peace also, and love, and of holy joy, and consolation. May we pass this day in the thankful remembrance of Thy mercies, and in the diligent performance of Thy commandments. May no evil thoughts, no angry tempers, no distressing doubts or fears disturb us. May we serve Thee our GOD; and live peaceably with all men. May we be kind, and humble; patient and thankful; and sober-minded, and temperate in all things. May we fulfil the duties of the day; and may we lie down at night, praising Thee again for all Thy goodness; and committing ourselves with holy confidence, to Thy mercy.

We ask these blessings, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our only Mediator.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

ELEVENTH MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, on whom all Thy creatures every where depend for life, and breath, and all things; in whose favour all their true happiness consists; and whose wrath is insupportable! we, Thy creatures, whom Thy hand hath made, and whom Thy bounty hath supported, kneel down to acknowledge the Author of our being, and to pray for Thy blessing upon us.

We lament, that we are by nature so prone to evil; and that, amidst the many gifts bestowed upon us, we so seldom lift up our thoughts to Him who is the giver. Every night, Thou again refreshest us with sleep; and every morning, Thou renewest Thy various mercies to us; giving us health, and strength, and talents for Thy service, and affording to us fresh opportunities for our usefulness in the world.

We pray, that, as our days pass away, we may be improving the time, which is allotted to us. May we gather wisdom from Thy sacred word. May we diligently attend on the means of grace: and may we labour, each of us, as Thy faithful servants, in our several callings.

We pray Thee to impress upon us a deep sense of the importance of eternity. May we be looking continually to the end of our course, and, remembering how soon all in which we here delight, shall have passed away for ever, may we prepare to give up our account of all things done in the body; and, day by day

may we have our conversation in heaven; moderating our affections towards the things of this world, and living here below a life of faith in the Son of God.

And now, O Lord, whatsoever may be that employment which Thy providence allotteth to us, may we fulfil it as in Thy fear, and with a view to Thy glory. And wheresoever we are this day, be Thou present with us to bless us. May Thy Spirit enlighten, strengthen, and direct us. May we fall into no sin; nor run into any kind of danger. We pray, especially, for grace to conquer those sins which do most easily beset us. Thou knowest, O Lord, our several infirmities. O give us grace to be careful and circumspect. Let us avoid every approach to our former temptations: and let us renew our repentance, with unfeigned sorrow, and contrition of heart.

Hear us, we now beseech Thee, in these our imperfect supplications. Forgive us all our past transgressions; and grant us grace for the time to come. All which we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWELFTH MORNING.

Almighty God, by whose will we were created, and by whose providence we have been sustained, by whose mercy we have been called to the knowledge of our Redeemer, and by whose grace whatever we have thought or done, which hath been acceptable to Thee, hath been inspired and directed,—vouchsafe unto us, this day, Thy blessing. Strengthen us for the performance of the duties now before us. And, since Thou hast ordained labour to be the lot of man, and knowest the wants and necessities of all Thy creatures, bless, from time to time, our several endeavours and employments. Give us, this day, our daily bread. Feed us with food convenient for us. If it be Thy pleasure to cause us to abound with the good things of this life, give us a compassionate spirit, that we may be ready to relieve the wants of others: but let neither riches, nor poverty, estrange our hearts from Thee: nor cause us to become negligent of those treasures in heaven which can never be taken from us. And, into whatever circumstances of life we may be brought, teach us to be cheerful and content. In our affliction, let us remember how often we have been succoured; and, in our prosperity, may we acknowledge from whose hand our blessings are received.

And do Thou dispose us all, most merciful God, so to remember our sins, that we may be brought to true repentance, and unfeigned sorrow, and contrition of soul. Strengthen our faith in Jesus Christ our Lord:

and grant, that through the gracious help of Thy Holy Spirit, we may obtain that peace which the world cannot give; and may be enabled to pass the residue of our lives, in humble resignation and willing obedience. We acknowledge, O God, that every day is Thy gift, and ought to be used according to Thy command. O Thou in whose hands are life and death, and by whose mercy we are spared, help us so to improve the time, that we may every day become more holy in Thy sight; and, when it shall please Thee to call us from this mortal state, may we resign our souls into Thy hands, with confidence and hope; and may we finally find mercy, and obtain a joyful resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We commend to Thy fatherly goodness all our relations and friends, especially those who are the most closely united to us. We beseech Thee to look mercifully upon them; and to grant them whatever may most promote their present and eternal joy.

Bless the President of these United States, and all in authority. Extend Thy goodness to our whole native land. Pity the sorrows, and relieve the necessities, of all mankind. And let Thy kingdom come; and Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven

O Lord, hear our prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake; to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

THIRTEENTH MORNING

Most gracious and merciful God, who hast protected us through the night, hast refreshed us with sleep, and hast brought us together this morning in peace,—We desire to present unto Thee our unfeigned thanks and praise for all Thy various and great mercies. We confess that we are unworthy to come into Thy presence, before whom the angels veil their faces, and in whose sight the heavens are not clean; for our lives have been unholy, and our sins many and great. If, therefore, Thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But we rejoice that there is with Thee forgiveness and plenteous redemption, through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Pleading, therefore, His sacrifice, and trusting in His intercession, we approach the throne of Thy grace, and say, "God be merciful to us sinners, for Jesus Christ's sake." O Lord, grant unto us true repentance, and a lively faith. Convince us of our guilt. Discover to us everything, (either in our hearts or lives,) which hath been displeasing to Thee.

We pray, that, through faith in the blood of Thy Son, we may obtain peace in our consciences; and that, through that blessed hope which is set before us, we may be raised above the various troubles, disappointments, and temptations, of this present evil world.

We pray, also, that through the knowledge of Thy truth, and the help of Thy Spirit, we may be disposed to fulfil every precept of Thy word. May we do unto all men as we would that they should do unto us; and

may we forgive one another, even as we hope to be forgiven. May we be clothed with humility; and, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, may we live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world. May we be content with such things as we have; fulfilling, each of us, our proper duties; and watching against anger, malice, hatred, envy, and all other evil tempers, which are ready to rise up within us. And thus doing Thy will, and walking in Thy ways, and improving every talent committed to us, may we wait for the second coming of our Lord.

We, also, most humbly beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, to look down with an eye of favour on all our friends and relations.

Bring home to Thy flock all those who are wandering in the ways of sin. Strengthen and confirm those who love Thy name, that they may rejoice in Thy salvation.

Be gracious unto all whom Thou hast disposed to be kind to us: sanctify them to Thyself; and shower down Thy best blessings upon them.

Pity those who are afflicted, tempted, persecuted, enslaved, or oppressed; and in Thy good time give them deliverance.

Give success to the labours of the ministers of Thy gospel. Bless and purify Thy Church. Have compassion on our native land; and, though many sins testify against us, take not away the means of grace so long afforded us.

Bless the President of these United States, and all in authority; direct the public measures to our best

interests, and to Thy glory: and teach all orders of men to serve their generation according to Thy will. And grant that all the changes in the kingdoms of the world may issue in Thy glory, and in the furtherance of Thy gospel.

These, and all other things needful for us, we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTEENTH MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who art the giver of all the good things which we enjoy, we, Thy creatures, who are here assembled together in Thy name, desire to offer our unfeigned thanks for all Thy temporal as well as spiritual mercies. We bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but, above all, for Thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our LORD JESUS CHRIST. We thank Thee, that the knowledge of this salvation hath extended to us; and that we have been instructed in the will of God, and in the blessed doctrines of Thy Gospel. We praise Thee for that good providence which hath directed our steps in life. We thank Thee, if Thou hast in any measure enlightened our minds to understand the truths which we have heard and to

know the things which make for our everlasting peace. O Lord, grant, we now most humbly beseech Thee, that we may not walk in darkness; but, as He that hath called us is Holy, may we also be Holy in all manner of conversation Give us grace to overcome our sinful appetites and passions; and to be sober and temperate in all things. Assist us, also, by Thy Holy Spirit, to subdue the corrupt affections of the mind; all anger, and malice, and envy, and pride, and covetousness; and make us patient and contented, kind and charitable, humble and spiritually-minded. We pray Thee also, to make us diligent, and useful, in that world in which Thou hast placed us. May we not misspend our time, nor neglect any opportunity of doing good; but may we be willing daily to deny ourselves, that we may the more abundantly minister to the various wants of others.

We pray Thee, O Lord, to give unto each of us grace to know the several duties to which we are called; and to be both faithful and zealous in the performance of them.

May those who bear rule in this house remember, that they are only the stewards of the good things which Thou entrustest to them; and that they must give account hereafter to their Master who is in heaven.

Give to the children of this family grace to be obedient in all things; and to learn to walk in the fear of the Lord, and to exercise brotherly kindness towards each other.

May the servants of this house remember, that Thine eye is upon them; and that the Gospel, which they hav

been taught, requires them not only to approve themselves to their master after the flesh, but also to please God who trieth the heart.

May we all live together in Christian peace, harmony, and love; endeavouring to administer to each other's comfort, to bear each other's burdens, and to promote each other's temporal as well as spiritual good. Teach us, also, to abound in charity towards all those with whom we may this day have any intercourse.

Pardon, we beseech Thee, for Christ's sake, the multitude of our past negligences and sins; and help us to awake unto righteousness, and to be diligent in every good work; and, when we shall lie down at night, may we have the testimony of our consciences, that we have been serving Thee according to our best opportunities and abilities, with humility and integrity of heart.

We pray for Thy blessing on our President and country; on our friends and relations; and on all who are afflicted in mind, body, or estate. Have pity on those who are walking after the way of their own hearts; and bring them home, O Lord, to Thy flock.

Pardon the coldness and imperfection of these our prayers; and accept them for Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

FIFTEENTH MORNING

O Thou Great and Eternal Being, God of all power and might, giver of every good and perfect gift, and author of all our mercies,—We kneel down, imploring Thee to bestow Thy protection and blessing on this family. Through the bountiful goodness of our Heavenly Father, we have been favoured with innumerable mercies; and we would humbly thank Thee for them: but we beseech Thee to add to all our other blessings the forgiveness of our sins through faith in that Saviour whom Thou hast revealed to us in the gospel. We pray Thee, therefore, to impress deeply on our minds, through the power of Thy Holy Spirit, the great doctrines of Thy word; to give us a clear perception of the evil of sin, a deep conviction of our own guilt, a solemn belief in heaven and hell, and a true sense of our obligations to the Lord who bought us. Suffer not that we, who have been baptized into the Christian name, and taught the truths of the gospel, should live in the same manner as unbelievers; but enable us, by applying those heart-affecting doctrines, which we have learnt, to our daily use in life, to become distinguished as the disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord. May we indeed cleave to the Lord, with full purpose of heart, being pure in our most secret thoughts and imaginations; suppressing those high and self-exalting thoughts which are so apt to rise up within us; and constantly bearing in mind how much we sin in all we do, and how entirely we owe every thing which we either have, or

hope for, to Thy bountiful goodness, and to Thy mercies in CHRIST JESUS.

And being supported by Thy grace, and grounded in the faith of Christ crucified for us, we pray that we may be enabled to practise every good work. May we be just and true in all our dealings; doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us. May we be humble, thankful, and contented; and may we do honour to Thy gospel by the manifestation of every Christian temper.

Give us grace to maintain a constant controversy with all evil:—may we ourselves avoid every approach to it; and may we endeavour, according to our opportunities and ability, to persuade all those, over whom we have any influence, to keep at the greatest distance from temptation. O LORD, enable us thus to show that we are Christians not only in general profession, but in all sincerity and seriousness. May we be strict and self-denying; yet kind and liberal to others, candid and charitable, pitiful and courteous. Teach us to understand Thine abounding grace in the gospel, that we may ourselves abound in every work of charity. Enable us to find favour in the sight of those around us; and especially of those who are dearest to us; that so we may improve our influence, for their benefit in this life, and for the furtherance of their everlasting salvation.

Bless us, O LORD, in these Christian purposes, for from Thee alone cometh the strength to serve Thee, and to Thee would we continually look up. Hear us, we beseech Thee, in these our supplications; and grant unto us the help of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may live

this day according to these our prayers; and that all the fruits of holiness may abound in us.

We ask every blessing, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SIXTEENTH MORNING.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast made the world and all things in it, whom all Thy creatures are bound to serve, in whose favour is life, and in whose displeasure is misery insupportable; who hast placed us here for a little season, and wilt ere long call us all to judgment,—We kneel down, O LORD, praying Thee to strengthen our faith in all the promises and threatenings of Thy word; that we may indeed live as those who know themselves to be frail and dying creatures on the brink of an awful eternity.

We bless Thee for having brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel. We thank Thee that Thy Son hath died and risen again, hath broken the bonds of death, and hath opened unto us the gates of everlasting life. We thank Thee for the glorious hopes held out to each believer in His name: and at the same time we would rejoice with trembling; remembering that condemnation which belongs to the despisers of His

Gospel, and to all who receive this grace of God in vain.

O Lord, grant unto us faith in that eternal world to which we are hastening. May we realize these unseen things :—may we turn from the love of this vain world : —may we perceive the sin which dwelleth in us, and the evil which lieth around us, and be looking forward to that blessed time when we shall put away the body of this death, and dwell for ever with the Lord. Give us grace to follow the faith and patience of Thy saints, who turned from sin to follow God, and who endured even to the end; whose hearts were estranged from things below, and whose affections were set on things above ; who went through trials, and persecutions, and a great fight of afflictions, counting that He, whom they served, was worthy of all obedience, and was able at length to save and deliver them. O may we, who have the example of their faith, be willing to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ; not living an idle, careless life, while we call ourselves the followers of them who now inherit the promises. May we daily mortify the body of sin, and daily renew the conflict with our spiritual enemies. May we be looking continually to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.

May we be so animated by our Christian faith, as to be willing cheerfully to endure the evils of life ; and to submit to all Thy righteous will concerning us. If there be any of us who are still strangers to Thee, O

teach us to remember how short and uncertain are all our days on earth :—Or if there be any of us who are indolent and trifling, too much occupied with this present world, O raise our thoughts to those things which are above, that we may be fellow-citizens with Thy saints and with the household of God. May we all give diligence to make our calling and election sure—may we all repent, and forsake our sins, and believe in CHRIST—may we all die daily to the things of time, and rise to newness of life—may we all so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal.

We ask every blessing in the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SEVENTEENTH MORNING.

O Lord Almighty, who art merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and of great goodness,—We approach Thee as the God of mercy, imploring Thee to hear these our prayers, and to pardon the multitude of our sins, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Day after day, we add to the number of our transgressions; every night, we have the sins of the preceding day to repent of; and every morning, we have reason to fear lest we should again yield to temptation, and return to our former iniquities. We pray, therefore, for Thy preserving and protecting grace. O Lord, put Thy Spirit into all our hearts; that we, being made pure and holy in our secret thoughts, may not fail to perform all that is good and acceptable in Thy sight.

Dispose each of us on this day habitually to employ our several faculties in Thy service. While we pursue the various duties of our calling, may we have a single eye to Thy glory; and may we undertake no employment on which we cannot hope for Thy blessing. And give us such a portion of Thy grace, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that we may desire to do not only that which is in some degree beneficial; but that which is most excellent and most extensively useful. May no spirit of self-indulgence, no love of ease, no dread of opposition, no fear of shame, prevent our laying out our lives heartily in Thy service. Make us willing in all respects to deny ourselves, that we may live unto Thee. Teach us to enter into the spirit of those Christians

and Apostles of old, who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might finish their course with joy: and who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ; who, living in unity and godly love, were seen striving together for the faith of the Gospel, in nothing terrified by their adversaries.

Grant unto every member of this family Thy peace, and all Thy heavenly consolations: and make us to be of one heart and one mind, praising Thee for Thy mercies, praying to Thee for Thy grace, and uniting in the confession of our daily sins before Thee.

Establish us in Thy faith, and fear, and love; and enlighten us, that we may understand Thy whole will concerning us. Where we mistake, have pity on our errors; and if we have wandered from the right way, do Thou in mercy bring us back. Lead us, O LORD, into the paths of righteousness and peace. And, if we have in any measure attained to the knowledge of Thy truth, may we bring our faith into active exercise. May we watch our hearts, and bridle our tongues, and govern our tempers. May we be ready to forgive, even as we hope to be forgiven. May we be stedfast, and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

We now commit ourselves to Thee for this day; help us to live according to these our prayers; and thus may we be prepared for Thy heavenly kingdom: we ask it for our SAVIOUR's sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

EIGHTEENTH MORNING.

MOST MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS GOD, we kneel down to thank Thee for Thy protection and care during the past night: and we now lift up our voice unto Thee in the morning, imploring Thee this day to bless us; watching over us by Thy merciful providence; putting Thy Spirit within us, and delivering us from all evil.

We are prone, O LORD, to fall into sin. How many incidents, every day, arise, which, if Thy grace be withheld from us, draw forth our natural corruptions! We, therefore, pray Thee, who knowest our frame, and foresecest the trials which are to come upon us, mercifully to prepare us for them; and enable us, amidst the various difficulties, temptations, and sorrows of life, to walk as the patient followers of CHRIST, and as the faithful servants of the Most High GOD.

We bless Thee, O GOD, for all Thy goodness to us in times past:—for every trial which Thou hast lightened; for every difficulty and snare which Thou hast taken out of our way; and for every affliction which Thou hast either sanctified or removed.

We thank Thee, that we are here met together, in so much peace and comfort, to offer up our praises to Thee, we thank Thee, that we are yet in the land of the living; having time given us for repentance, and having every opportunity of knowing Thy Holy Will. We thank Thee for all Thine unnumbered mercies; for our health and strength, and all our worldly goods; for our friends and kind benefactors; and we pray that

we may, each of us in our stations, be instruments in Thy hand for the benefit of our fellow-creatures, and at the same time, faithful witnesses, in the world, of the truth and excellency of Thy Gospel.

O LORD, grant that this day, we may walk in a manner worthy of our great obligations to Thee, and of our high and heavenly calling. May we remember both Thy spiritual and temporal mercies, and be occupied in acts of grateful obedience to Thee. And we pray Thee to impress upon us more deeply those truths of Thy Gospel, by which our hearts become prepared for every good and beneficent work. May we think of that Saviour who died on the cross for us; who endured all the extremities of misery that we might be saved, and is now at Thy right hand, making intercession for us. May we remember our Christian profession; living as believers in this crucified LORD, deeply affected with the remembrance of His death, and animated by His glorious resurrection. May we all die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; and, as He, who hath called us, is Holy, may we also be holy in all manner of conversation. We pray, O LORD, for Thy protection this day: and may we faithfully follow Him whose name we bear; may we have hope in His mercy, and may we at length enter into His glory.

Our Father, &c

The grace of our Lord, &c.

NINETEENTH MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, we desire to thank Thee for all Thy past mercies; at the same time beseeching Thee to give us Thy continual grace, and to pour down Thy blessing upon us.

We pray Thee to conduct us by Thy merciful providence in our passage through this life; to defend us amidst our many dangers; to save us from every trial, which we are too weak to endure; and so to order all the circumstances which befall us, that we may not be overpowered with difficulties, nor overwhelmed with temptations, which may come upon us unprepared.

Preserve us, O Lord, from day to day, and from year to year. Give us grace to hate sin, and to avoid those societies and employments, which would lead our hearts from Thee. May our eyes be opened to see the wickedness around us; and may we carefully abstain from all conformity to the sinful customs of this evil world. But when we reflect on the many hindrances to our leading a Christian life; when we contemplate our temptations, both from within and from without; when we look back to the past instances of our weakness, and forward to the yet untried scenes of danger and of difficulty, through which we may, each of us, have to pass before we leave the world,—on Thee, O Lord, and on Thee alone, are we led to trust; and to Thee do we lift up our daily prayer, for grace to pre-

serve us in the paths of righteousness, so that we may end our days in peace.

O Lord, grant unto us, this day, Thy Holy Spirit. Keep alive in our souls the sense of spiritual things Impress us with a recollection of the great truths which we have been taught. Fill us with a knowledge of those doctrines of Thy Gospel, which Thou hast appointed to be the means of delivering man from sin, and of preserving him in the ways of holiness, in the midst of an ungodly world.

Enable us to walk worthy of the Lord throughout the day which is now before us. May we be obedient to Thy will, submissive to Thy providence, and ever thankful for Thy mercies.

Hear, O Lord, and answer these our prayers; forgive us also our numberless transgressions, and accept our imperfect services, for Thy mercies' sake in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTIETH MORNING.

O Lord, God Almighty, whose creatures we are to whom our prayers are constantly addressed, and whom we daily profess to serve, bestow upon us Thy grace, that we may yield up to Thee our hearts, and place our delight in acts of obedience to Thee. We beseech Thee so to strengthen our faith, and to animate our hearts with Thy continual love, that we may be enabled to triumph over those temptations to which we are exposed. Give us Thy Holy Spirit; turn us from the love of sin, if we are in any measure inclining to it; and put into us such an ardent desire to please Thee, that we may be always employing our time and talents in Thy service. We desire to acknowledge Thy right over us: we are bound to honour Thee by all we do, and to seek our Maker's glory.

We thank Thee, O Lord, that besides our obligations as creatures to the great Author of our existence, Thou hast added the most affecting motives to win us to obedience. We are not our own: we are bought with a price. Thy Son hath died to save us. He hath suffered on the cross, that we might be free. He hath given his life a ransom for us; that He might constrain us by the greatness of His love, to give up our powers to Him. Grant, therefore, O Lord, that we, being daily mindful of what our Saviour hath done for us, may show that we are sensible of our obligations, by the habitual readiness of our minds to do and suffer all things which Thou shalt appoint for us, or in any wise require of us

Enable us, O Lord, this day to deny ourselves, that we may live unto Thee. As the redeemed of the Lord, may we abstain from sin, and flee from every snare. May we be holy in all manner of conversation; awfully impressed with a sense of Thy holiness, knowing that we are called to become pure in heart, if we hope to see God. And help us to contend with the iniquity of the world around us. Let us not yield to its influence and example; but let us consider ourselves as passing on to a better country, accounting it our great concern to escape from the snares which now surround us; to make sure, each of us, our own salvation; and to be doing good, before we die, with the talents committed to us. Thus may we pass the day which is now before us; and, when the hour of our death shall come, may we then have abundant proof, that we have walked by faith, and not by sight; and that we shall be numbered with Thy chosen people, in glory everlasting.

We present these our imperfect supplications, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-FIRST MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD! we acknowledge ourselves bound by innumerable obligations, to praise and adore, to love and serve Thee. From Thee we have received our being. Thou art our constant preserver, and bountiful benefactor; the source of every present enjoyment, and of all our hopes. Thou hast, in Thine infinite condescension, been pleased to look down with pity on our fallen race; and freely to offer salvation to us through JESUS CHRIST. We adore Thee, for the promises of Thy mercy and grace, and for the joyful prospect of eternal life, so clearly revealed in Thy holy word. Impress our minds, O LORD, with that deep sense of the important truths made known to us, which shall regulate all our thoughts, and words, and actions.

But while we celebrate Thy goodness to us, we have cause to be ashamed of our conduct. We have great reason, O LORD, to be humbled before Thee, on account of the coldness and insensibility of our hearts; the disorder and irregularity of our lives; and the prevalence of worldly affections within us. Too often have we indulged the tempers which we ought to have subdued, and have left our duty unperformed. O LORD, be merciful to us for Thy Son JESUS CHRIST's sake. Produce in us deep repentance, and a lively faith in that Saviour who hath died for our sins, and risen again for our justification.

And may Thy pardoning mercy be accompanied with

the sanctifying influence of Thy Spirit; that we may no more sin against Thee, but may live from henceforth, as becomes the redeemed of the LORD, and the candidates for a happy immortality. Put Thy fear into our hearts, that we may never more depart from Thee. Fix our affections on those things which are eternal. Convince us more effectually of the vanity of this world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; of the evil of sin, and its tendency to make us miserable; of the value of our souls, and the awfulness of that everlasting state, on the borders of which we stand.

We also desire to thank Thee for the watchful care of Thy providence during the past night. We have lain down to sleep; and, blessed be Thy name, we have arisen in safety. May the lives which Thou hast prolonged be devoted to Thy service. O LORD, continue to us Thy favour and protection on this day. Save us from sin, and from all evil. Enable us faithfully to perform every relative duty. May we as a family dwell together in peace. May we subdue every angry passion; and, loving Thee with a supreme affection, may we love each other with pure hearts, fervently. Preserve us from those temptations to which we are daily exposed. Make us sensible of our weakness, so that our hearts may be often raised to Thee, in humble and fervent supplications for Thy grace. When we are in company may it be our care to do and to receive good. When we are alone, may we remember that our heavenly Father is with us.

Bless the President of these United States and all who are in authority. Be favourable to this nation.

Save us from the evil designs of our enemies; and continue to us, if it please Thee, the blessing of peace.

Visit all mankind with the light of Thy Gospel; and let its influence increase in this land.

In tender mercy, regard all who are in affliction. Grant unto our dear friends and relations every blessing which is needful for them. May they and we experience Thy favour in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-SECOND MORNING

O LORD GOD, our Heavenly Father, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, we beseech Thee to look down on us Thy servants; who desire now, with true humility of soul, to offer up unto Thee our prayers and supplications. We thank Thee for Thy merciful protection during the past night; and we adore that goodness which hath hitherto supplied our wants, and lightened our troubles; which hath preserved our lives, in the midst of dangers; and hath caused us to lie down, and rise up, in peace and safety.

We pray Thee to preserve us this day from evil.

Save us from all things which afflict the body and especially from whatsoever can hurt the soul. May we go forth in Thy strength, to contend against the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and to fulfil the various duties of our Christian calling. Save us from the sins which most easily beset us. Preserve us from idleness and negligence, as well as from presumptuous transgressions; and deliver us from that insensibility of conscience, which might lead us to justify ourselves, though living a careless and unprofitable life. Grant unto us such knowledge of Thee, that we may love Thee above all things, and earnestly desire to obey every precept of Thy holy word. Teach us to redeem the time; to be watchful and circumspect; and to abstain from all appearance of evil. Teach us to be fervent in spirit, serving the LORD, and to be never weary of well-doing: and let us take continual care, lest, through some liberty in which we indulge ourselves, we should draw others into sin, or should cause the Gospel, which we profess, to be evil spoken of.

O LORD, help us also seriously to consider the shortness of life, and the nearness of death and of eternity; that, whatsoever our hands find to do, we may do it with all our might. Let us have our loins girded and our lamps burning, and be as servants waiting for their Lord. Let us not say in our hearts, that our Lord delayeth his coming; but let us remember, that the day of our death may overtake us suddenly; and that blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find watching.

And grant, O most merciful GOD, that when at length

we shall be called before Thine awful throne, to give account to Him who is the Judge of quick and dead. we may hear that joyful sentence proclaimed in our ears: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of he world:"—may our portion then be with the children of GOD, and our inheritance among the saints!

We beseech Thee to bless all our friends and relations. Pardon their sins; supply their temporal as well as spiritual wants; and conduct them safely, through all the temptations and dangers of this evil world, to the same land of everlasting rest and peace.

Have mercy on all for whom we are bound to pray succour the tempted; comfort the dejected; sustain those who are bowed down with age, or with infirmity, and are drawing near to death. Have pity on all thine afflicted servants, and enable them to believe, that whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth; and that, through much tribulation, they shall enter into the Kingdom of GOD. And give unto each of us grace to feel for the various wants of others, and to minister liberally to their relief.

We offer up these our humble and imperfect prayers, in the name of our only Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-THIRD MORNING.

Blessed God, who hast caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant unto us, we beseech Thee, such faith in the truth of Thy holy word, that we may be made partakers of Thine everlasting promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dispose our minds to receive, with meekness, every doctrine which Thou hast revealed; and save us from that spiritual blindness and ignorance which naturally overspread our minds. Teach us to know Thee our God: to adore Thee for Thy greatness; to admire Thee for Thy holiness; and to love Thee for Thy goodness to the children of men.

Open Thou our eyes, that we may perceive ourselves to be sinners in Thy sight,—partakers of a fallen nature as well as actual transgressors against Thee: and make us to feel, that we stand in continual need, both of Thy pardoning mercy, and of Thy quickening grace. Enable us to receive Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of our souls; and, while we trust in the merits of His death, and in the efficacy of His intercession, let us acknowledge Him as our Lord, whom we are bound unreservedly to obey.

Give us grace, also, to believe the awful threatenings of Thy word. Thou hast declared to us, that the day is coming when all who are in their graves shall come forth,—they, that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they, that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. Help us to preserve in our minds

the remembrance of this approaching Judgment; that we may not dare to sin against Thee, but may abound in all those fruits of holiness which Thou will acknowledge and approve in the Great Day of JESUS CHRIST

And we pray Thee, O LORD, to dispose our minds to receive, with the true obedience of faith, every part of Thy holy word. May it be made profitable to us for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness: that we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work. May we be prepared by it, not only for this our daily employment of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, but for all the duties of our Christian calling. May we keep continually in our minds those things which we have learnt:—and, putting on the whole armour of GOD, may we be enabled to stand fast in every evil day; and to overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Defend us, O LORD, we most humbly beseech Thee, from all evil. Save us from the sins which most easily beset us. Let us command our tempers, and restrain our tongues. Let us add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. Let us be rich in good works, to the praise and glory of Thy name. And while we are thus receiving Thy truths into an honest heart, and are endeavouring, by Thy grace assisting us, to walk according to the precepts of Thy written word; may Thy Providence direct our steps in life, and watch over us, for good. Defend us, we beseech Thee, to the end of our lives; and let Thy

good Spirit abide within us, that we may not faint in our Christian course, nor become weary of well-doing

We pray for Thy blessing on all our friends and relations. May they walk by the light of the same blessed Gospel. May both they and we possess, in this world, knowledge of Thy truth; and, in the world to come, life everlasting.

We offer up these and all our supplications in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator and Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-FOURTH MORNING.

O LORD, our Heavenly Father, through whose providential goodness, we are now permitted to see the light of another day, grant unto us grace to devote the lives which Thou lengthenest, to Thy service.

Assist us in all the duties to which we shall be called this day: and direct us to those employments which shalt be fittest for us. Thou hast appointed unto every man his work in life: help us to be faithful and diligent in our calling; to be, at the same time, cheerful and contented with our lot: and, amidst all our earthly occupations, to be mindful of a better world. Deliver us

from all those anxieties and cares by which we are too apt to be disturbed.

We desire to remember that our life is as a shadow which soon passeth away; and that the difficulties and trials, which we must meet with here, will soon cease for ever. Teach us, also, moderation in our temporal enjoyments. May we chiefly desire those spiritual blessings which bring comfort to the soul. O grant unto us pardon of our sins, and a true faith in JESUS CHRIST, our LORD. Enable us to lay hold on the promises of Thy Gospel; and to delight ourselves with the sense of Thy favour here, and with the hope of eternal life hereafter. And make all things to work together for our good. Be Thou pleased so to order the events of our lives, that we may see continual reason to praise Thee for Thy dispensations towards us; and thus, being guided by Thy providence, and sanctified by Thy Spirit, may we attain at length to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

We pray, also, for all our dear friends and relations. Pardon, O LORD, their trespasses and sins; and make them partakers of the promises of Christ in His Gospel. Lead them through their various temptations and trials: — make them happy in themselves; and blessings to us, and to all around them.

Have pity on the sons and daughters of affliction: — sanctify to them their troubles in this life; and teach them to rejoice in the LORD amidst all their worldly tribulation. Bless the rising generation; and may there be never wanting in this land a seed to serve Thee.

We pray, especially, that the children of this family

may be brought up in Thy fear. May the Lord save them from this evil world. May the Lord "strengthen, stablish, and settle" them; and, after a life full of good works, give them an abundant entrance into His heavenly kingdom.

We present these our imperfect prayers, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our ever-blessed Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-FIFTH MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVER-BLESSED GOD, who art the Father of all the families of the earth, and the ever-present help of those who put their trust in Thee—who hast sustained us amidst the weakness of infancy; hast guided us in youth; and preserved us during our advancing years;—who, by Thy providence, hast united us in one household;—who hast supplied our wants, and abundantly provided, as well for our bodies, as for our souls;—who hast delivered us from some of the scenes of temptation, and of sorrow, to which we see others exposed; and permittest us to lie down, and rise up, in peace and safety;—We are now met together to thank Thee for the mercies of the past night, and to acknowledge that it is by Thy power and goodness alone that we are preserved from day to day. O LORD

protect us this day from evil. Go Thou forth with us to the several duties of our stations; and enable us to do all things in Thy fear, and to Thy glory.

We beseech Thee to put Thy Spirit into our heart, that we may not depart from Thee; nor forget any of Thy commandments. May we serve Thee with humble, patient, and quiet minds; and may our love abound both towards Thee, and towards all men. Deliver us from those angry tempers to which our natures are so prone; and from all those sins which war against the soul. And may we grow in grace:—may we, more and more, prevail over the temptations by which we have formerly been overcome. May we lay aside every weight, and the sins which have most easily beset us; ever looking unto Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and pressing towards the mark of the prize of our high calling, in Christ Jesus. May we remember that, in due time, we shall reap if we faint not; and may we be stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;—may we be faithful, even unto death; knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

We pray for Thy special blessing on the employments in which we shall this day engage. May we undertake nothing which is contrary to Thy will; and may our good endeavours be crowned by Thee with success. We would remember, that, without Thee we can do nothing:—that without the concurrence of Thy providence, we can fulfil no purpose of our minds, and that we can do nothing spiritually good without the aid of Thy grace:—unto Thee, therefore, let our eyes be continually lifted up.

Bless, O LORD, every member of this family. [*Grant unto the children a spirit of docility and obedience.*] [*Make every servant to know the duties of his station, and to maintain a conscience void of offence:*] and may none of us forget Thee our GOD, nor be indifferent to the great and glorious hope which Thou hast set before us. O grant, that, in all our works—begun, continued, and ended in Thee,—we may, each of us, glorify Thy holy name; and, finally, by Thy mercy, obtain everlasting life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Have mercy on all our friends and relations. Pity the poor and the afflicted. Give peace to those who are troubled in mind; and supply the various necessities of all Thy creatures.

We ask every blessing, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-SIXTH MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND MOST MERCIFUL GOD! We beseech Thee to pour down Thy blessing on us Thy servants, who are now assembled to worship Thy holy name.

Thou art infinitely great and glorious! Before Thee, the angels veil their faces; and the heavens are not pure in Thy sight! We are weak, and helpless; sinful, and corrupt; exposed to dangers on every side, and in continual need of Thy gracious assistance. O LORD, preserve us through this day. By Thee we have been protected during the night. Continue to us Thy wonted care; and guard, we pray Thee, both our bodies and our souls from every kind of evil.

We are now entering on the duties of our several callings. May the LORD enable each of us to be faithful and diligent in them; as those who must hereafter "give account of all things done in the body," to Him who is the Judge of quick and dead.

We desire to remember that Thine eye seeth us wheresoever we are; and pierceth even into our inmost thoughts. We pray, therefore, that all our most secret ways may be pleasing unto Thee, O Thou searcher of hearts! Let us not attempt to deceive either ourselves, or those around us, by the mere appearance of goodness; but may we have the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world.

Give us grace to overcome our sinful appetites and passions, to mortify our pride; and to bring every

member of our bodies, and every faculty of our souls, into captivity to the law of Christ. May we put away all hatred and variance, all anger and strife, all malice and evil-speaking; and may this day be a day of peace and harmony to every member of this family; that so, when we assemble again to worship Thee at night, our prayers may be accepted, being the offering of those who dwell together in love; and who have learnt to forgive one another, even as they hope to be forgiven.

We pray Thee to bless the events which shall befal us on this day. Thou, O Lord, orderest all things for us; and we know not what a day may bring forth. O sanctify to us our prosperity, and our adversity; our health, and our sickness; our daily comforts and enjoyments, as well as our anxieties and disappointments. Purify our hearts, more and more, by the various dispensations of Thy providence; and fit us, by the several vicissitudes of this mortal life, for that great and final change which we must soon experience.

We desire, also, to pay unto Thee our grateful thanks for Thy past mercies. Thou hast sustained us in our infancy; hast guided us in youth; and hast preserved us during our advancing years. Thou hast often raised us when we have been brought low:—Thou hast succoured us in trouble; hast delivered us in sickness; and healed all our infirmities. While others have fallen, we have been kept alive. Day after day, we remain the monuments of Thy mercy; and comforts surround us on every side. O Lord, we bless Thy name for what is past; and we pray, that the remembrance of Thy goodness may lead us to repentance; and may

make us careful to walk according to Thy will, for the days which are yet to come. Pardon our many offences; and grant us perfect remission of our sins, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST.

We further beseech Thee to bestow Thy blessing on our dear friends and relations. Thou hast encouraged and commanded us to intercede for one another; and we desire, therefore, most earnestly to commend to Thy fatherly care all those whom it is our duty to remember in our prayers. We entreat Thee to be merciful to those who have at any time shown us mercy:—to pity the poor and the afflicted—to strengthen the weak—and to comfort the desponding mind.

Have mercy on the rising generation. Save them from the follies and ignorances of their youth; and raise them up to be a seed to serve Thee, when we shall be gathered to our fathers.

Hear us, O LORD, in these our prayers and intercessions, for the sake of our only Saviour JESUS CHRIST

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MORNING.

Almighty and everlasting God, who art the Author of our being, the Preserver of our lives, and the Giver of every blessing which we enjoy:—unto Thee do we now direct our Prayer, beseeching Thee this day to supply our returning wants and necessities. Grant unto us all things needful both for the body and soul: and especially, vouchsafe unto us pardon of our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We confess, that we are unworthy of Thy favour; for we have continually trespassed against Thee: but Thou art good, and gracious, unto those who freely acknowledge their transgressions, and cast themselves on Thy mercy. O Lord, we pray, that we, being delivered from the fear of Thy wrath, through a lively faith in Jesus Christ Thy Son, may serve Thee with cheerful and quiet minds; and may partake in all the consolations of Thy Spirit as well as walk in the way of Thy commandments.

We pray for integrity and diligence in our several callings. May we this day remember that Thine eye is upon us. May we carefully avoid hypocrisy, and deceit, and every approach to dishonesty and unfaithfulness. May we, also, watch against pride, and vanity; against envy, and hatred; against selfishness, and covetousness; and against whatsoever sin may most easily beset us. May we each fulfil our proper work with humility of mind; and approve ourselves not only

to those around us, but to Thee, O God, who searchest the heart.

May we, likewise, exercise fervent charity towards all men. Teach us to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice; and to minister, to the utmost of our opportunities and abilities, to the various wants of our fellow-creatures: following the example of our Lord and Saviour, who hath taught us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." And grant unto us grace in every respect to adorn by our lives that holy Gospel which we profess.

We pray Thee, also, to guide our future steps. Be Thou our constant helper and defender, ordaining for us that condition in life which shall most conduce to our eternal welfare. If Thou sendest trouble, impart unto us strength to bear it; and save us from those temptations which might prove the occasion of our falling. If prosperity be our lot, give us grace to be thankful for it; and to use with moderation our several enjoyments May we remember that the time is short —that our light affliction is but for a moment—that our earthly pleasures, also, will soon be past—that all the glory of man is but as the flower of the grass—and that the fashion of this world passeth away.

We would, further, intercede with Thee in behalf of all our friends and relations. Bless them in their persons, in their families, and in all their undertakings. Grant unto them the comforts of Thy grace here; and make them finally partakers of glory everlasting.

We implore Thee to bestow Thy special favour on the rising generation. Save them from the contagion

of this vain and evil world. Watch over them during the weakness and inexperience of their youth; and prepare them for the duties to which Thy providence shall call them.

We commend to Thy fatherly care the poor, and destitute; the prisoner, and captive; the sick, and the afflicted. Send help from above to those who are under sore temptations:—strengthen the feeble knees, and raise up those who have fallen:—and teach us all to exercise patience, and forbearance, and loving kindness, towards each other.

We offer these our imperfect prayers, in the name of our only Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MORNING.

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, who art the Giver of all good things, we desire to thank Thee for Thy mercies during the past night, and for all the numberless blessings which we enjoy. We would begin this day with Thy solemn worship; thus acknowledging Thine hand in the bounties of Thy providence, and professing our gratitude and obedience unto Thee. We would, also, praise Thee for the gift of Jesus Christ Thy Son, by whom we obtain pardon of sin, and all things necessary for our everlasting salvation. Adored be Thy name that Thou hast not left us in ignorance of Thee; but hast given us Thy holy word; and hast caused us to abound with the means of grace. We would daily remember these Thy spiritual gifts; and we would now resolve to spend this day in a manner worthy of our Christian profession.

Assist us, O Lord, by Thy Holy Spirit, to bring these our prayers to good effect. Strengthen us against our temptations:—direct us in every difficulty:—comfort us in all our sorrows, and adversities; and enable us to fulfil every part of that Christian duty in which we have been instructed.

May we love our neighbour as ourselves; and do unto all men as we would that they should do unto us. May we honour and obey the civil authority. May we submit ourselves to all our governors and teachers. May we hurt nobody by word or deed. May we be true and just in all our dealings; and bear no malice nor hatred

in our hearts. May we keep our hands from stealing; and our tongues from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering. May we preserve our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. May we not covet other men's goods; but learn, and labour truly, to get our living; and to do our duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased GOD to call us.

Pardon all our negligence in time past; and give us grace continually to examine ourselves; and to amend our lives according to Thy holy word.

We desire to add our humble supplications for all those whom it is our duty to remember in our prayers. Have compassion on the poor and the afflicted:—send them help, O LORD, in their hour of need; and sustain them with Thy heavenly consolations, when all human aid shall fail. We pray for the young and the ignorant:—may they be instructed in the way in which they ought to walk; and may they become instruments by which the knowledge of Thee and of Thy Son JESUS CHRIST shall extend to distant generations.

Hear us, O LORD, in these our imperfect prayers, which we humbly present to Thee, in the name of our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIRST SUNDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVER-BLESSED GOD! Thou art the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible: Thou sittest in the highest heavens; and art exalted above all blessing and praise:—before Thee the angels veil their faces; and the heavens are not pure in Thy sight. Thou didst create all things:—Thou upholdest all things:—Thou sustainest the lives of the creatures whom Thou hast made:—And Thou governest all events, by Thine unceasing Providence. Thou art continually present with us; and seest the secrets of all hearts;—and Thou wilt hereafter, bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

We bless Thee, that, of Thy great goodness, Thou hast sent Thy Son JESUS CHRIST to redeem for ever from death and hell our immortal souls, which were made in Thine own image; and that Thou hast given us an assurance of our own resurrection, by raising Him from the dead on the third day.

We praise Thee for these Thy sabbaths, on which we maintain a perpetual commemoration of this victory of our once crucified and now ascended Lord; and are continually instructed, by the ministers of His gospel, in all things which concern our everlasting salvation. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may this day hear Thy sacred word with reverence and holy fear, with serious and deep attention, and with all humility and thankfulness. Enable us to join in the prayers of Thy people, with devout and contrite hearts; and be Thou

pleased so to bless both our public worship, and our private meditations, that we may be made partakers of Thine everlasting promises in CHRIST JESUS, and may advance in all holiness.

O LORD, strengthen our faith on this day by means of those religious exercises in which we shall engage: —deliver us from every slavish fear of Thy wrath;—fix our hope on our ever-blessed Redeemer;—and give us joy and peace in believing. Let us love Thee, for the unnumbered bounties of Thy providence; and, especially, for Thy mercies in our redemption through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Give us an increasing sense of our unworthiness, and a clearer knowledge of those peculiar sins which most easily beset us; that we may more fully comprehend the riches of Thy grace in Christ; and may, also, better know how to reform that which hath been evil in us.

We pray, that Thy Gospel may from time to time be so delivered to us, that we may grow in all wisdom. Suffer not, that any of us should continue self-deceived. Let not death overtake us unprepared; but do Thou, by Thy Holy Spirit, give such effect to the preaching of Thy word, and to all other means of grace, that we may, each of us, heartily repent, and unfeignedly believe, and bring forth abundantly fruits meet for repentance, to the praise and glory of Thy name.

Let Thy blessing every where accompany the preaching of Thy Gospel on this day. May the God of Grace pour forth the abundance of His Spirit on the ministers and on the hearers. May they who have lived in sin be awakened to a sense of their danger. May the un-

believers be convinced; the thoughtless be alarmed; and the weak be strengthened. May the young be guided in the right way; and the afflicted soul be comforted. May the foundation of Thine universal Church be enlarged; and may believers be built up in faith, and hope, and love; and learn to understand what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of GOD.

Bestow Thy special blessing on those who are labouring to extend in foreign lands the knowledge of a crucified Redeemer. Assist them by Thy providence and grace, that they may contend successfully against idolatry and superstition. Strengthen them by Thy Holy Spirit; and, in the midst of all their difficulties and trials, impart unto them the abundance of Thy consolations. Open the hearts of many to receive Thy Gospel in the love of it. Let every wilderness at length blossom as the rose. Let the light spring up to them who have long sat in darkness; and let the days come when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, when wars shall cease, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

Hear us, O LORD, in these our prayers and intercessions, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator and Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

SECOND SUNDAY MORNING.

[*Communion of The Lord's Supper.*]

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who didst make man in Thine own image; and, when he had fallen from his first estate, didst send Thy Son from heaven to save him;—and who hast appointed the ministers of Thy word to preach repentance, and remission of sins; and to bring all men to the obedience of faith;—we pray Thee to give us grace this day to hear with reverence Thy holy word, [*and to profit by Thy sacred ordinances.*]

We would enter upon the duties of the Sabbath, humbly beseeching Thee to impress our minds with an earnest desire of those things which concern our salvation. Deliver us from the love of this world; and from that multitude of anxieties and cares, to which, through the sinfulness and frailty of our nature, we are continually prone. Elevate our thoughts to things above;—convince us of the shortness of time, and of the value of eternity; of the uncertainty of this our mortal state; and of the near approach of that day when we shall give account of all things done in the body; and shall hear from Thee our eternal doom. O LORD, what is our life:—it is but as a watch in the night:—it is as a vapour that vanisheth away:—it is as the grass of the field, which in the evening is cut down and withered. But, while we feel and know that we must shortly die, and that here all is vanity and vexation of

spirit, we desire to bless Thy holy name, that, however few and evil may be the days of our pilgrimage, Thou hast provided us with many great and glorious hopes, which, we trust, shall issue in the final gift of everlasting life.

O grant us grace to lay hold on those promises which are set before us; and to give all diligence, that we may make our calling and election sure; and thus may that world, in which we dwell, become the door of entrance to a better state; the passage to a heavenly Canaan; the blessed means of bringing us to Thee, our Father, and to Jesus Christ our Saviour, to the whole company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

We pray Thee to make the present Sabbath instrumental to this holy end. May we examine ourselves, and repent of our sins, and renew our vows of obedience to Thee. May we shake off our indolence and self-indulgence; and learn, more and more, to walk in the Spirit, and to mortify the whole body of sin. And while we thus strive to purify our souls through the love of the truth, may Thy preached word come to us with increasing power, and with demonstration of the Spirit, and with much assurance. May we grow in the knowledge of Thee and of Thy Son Jesus Christ:—may we abound more and more in faith, and hope, and love:—and may these holy seasons prepare us for that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

O Lord, go forth with us this day to Thy public worship; and pour down upon us Thy Holy Spirit. Repress our vain imaginations. Dispose our minds to

prayer, and praise; and to fervent gratitude for Thy temporal, as well as spiritual, mercies. [*Help us to commemorate Thy redeeming love; and to renew our exercise of faith in Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.*]

We beseech Thee, O LORD, to bless the preaching of Thy Gospel on this day to all who shall be the hearers of it. Send forth Thy light and Thy truth to every part of our benighted world; and shower down, especially on this nation, the abundance of Thy grace, through the diligent and faithful ministry of Thy word among us. Purify every part of Thy professing Church. Unite us in the bonds of a common faith; and teach us all to love one another.

Give success to every endeavour to enlighten the ignorant; to relieve the poor; to comfort the afflicted; to deliver the oppressed from him who spoileth him; and to promote peace and good will among men. Pour into the hearts of all, who know Thy truth, a spirit of enlarged benevolence; and raise up many who shall go forth in Thy strength, both to multiply their deeds of charity, and to carry Thy Gospel into all lands.

We offer these our humble and earnest supplications, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our blessed and only Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

THIRD SUNDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY LORD OUR GOD, Creator of all things, Judge of all men, who art also the merciful Father of all Thy creatures, we adore Thee for Thy great goodness, in providing not only for our temporal necessities, but also for the spiritual wants of our souls.

We thank Thee for Thy holy word, by which we are instructed in Thy will, and are made wise unto salvation. We thank Thee for all the means of grace which Thou hast appointed for our edification. We thank Thee, also, for these Thy Sabbaths, on which our thoughts are called away, from the cares and employments of this present life, to the consideration of those things which are eternal.

Grant, O LORD, we beseech Thee, that we may not neglect those great religious advantages which we possess; but may attend reverently to the truths which we shall this day hear; and worship Thee with truly humble and contrite hearts. Prepare our minds to receive the seed which shall this day be sown in them; and suffer not that we should give way to wandering thoughts, and to an indolent and worldly spirit. May we remember, when we are in the house of GOD, in whose service we are engaged; and whose word it is that we hear; and, when Thy Gospel is preached, may we be so awed by the terrors of the Lord, and so affected by the sense of Thy mercy, that we may lay to heart those things which we hear; and may none of us receive this grace of GOD in vain. And when we return

from Thy house, dispose us all to consider our ways Let us turn our thoughts to whatever hath been amiss in us during the past week :—let us implore Thy mercy in our secret prayers :—and let us read with care Thy holy scriptures.

O Lord, help us to consider how few are our days on earth ; and how soon we may be called to give up our account of the privileges which we have enjoyed, and of the talents committed to us. We have only a short and uncertain life between us, and—eternal happiness, or misery. O let us now redeem the time ;—before the day of our death shall come, and our sentence be sealed everlastingly. Let us make haste to obey Thy voice :—let us be diligent in endeavouring to know Thy will ; and to understand the doctrines of Thy Gospel.

And to this end may Thy Spirit enlighten and direct us ;—guide us into all truth :—save us from all ignorance, and blindness, and hardness of heart :—preserve us from those delusions which are fatal to the soul. Let us not speak peace to ourselves, when there is no peace ; nor hope that we have an interest in Christ, when we have not repented of our sins, and have no true faith in His name. O Lord, produce in us sincere repentance. If we are yet living in sin, show us, we pray Thee, our danger ;—make us to understand both our own sinfulness, and Thy mercy ; and lead us to that Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.

Bless, we pray Thee, the ministers of Thy Gospel Do Thou give great success to their labours. May they, by the word which they shall deliver awaken

those who are yet dead in their sins; and may they convince the wavering; and establish the weak; and comfort the feeble-minded; and raise up those who are fallen: and may Thy true servants be built up in their most holy faith, and be made perfect in every good work.

Hear us, O most merciful LORD, in these our humble supplications, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTH SUNDAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who didst send Thine only Son into the world to die upon the cross, and to become a propitiation for sin, and hast promised to all who repent and believe in Him, that they shall be made heirs of eternal life;—grant unto us such humble and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our misdeeds, may be made partakers of that blessed hope, which is set before us in JESUS CHRIST.

We also beseech Thee to grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not continue to transgress Thy laws, nor harden our hearts in unbelief. Turn us, O LORD, from our evil ways. Teach us, while we adore Thee for Thy redeeming mercy, to live to the praise of that Saviour who hath died for us. May we remember that

He, who descended from heaven to save us from condemnation, came also "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." May we have grace to walk according to His example, and to do whatever is pleasing in Thy sight.

We pray Thee to send Thy blessed Gospel over the world. Put an end to infidelity and atheism, to superstition and false religion, to heresy and schism, to ignorance and vice, and to war and discord. Let the nations of the earth receive Thy truth in the love of it; and being reconciled to Thee through JESUS CHRIST, may they live in peace and unity.

We also pray Thee to purify Thy professing church in this land. We would lament the iniquity even of our holy things; and would beseech Thee to strengthen the faith of Thy servants, and to enlarge their charity, that they, being examples of holiness, may lead others, who "see their good works, to glorify their Father which is in heaven."

We implore Thy blessing on all the faithful preachers of Thy word. May Thy grace both prevent and follow them; and may they eminently adorn, by their lives, that holy doctrine which they teach.

Look down in mercy on the rising generation. Put into the hearts of parents and teachers zeal for the spiritual good of those over whom Thou hast placed them. Give them wisdom from above, that they may know how to inculcate true and strict religion; and oper the minds of the young, that they may receive instruction with a teachable spirit; and, as they grow in years

may advance not only in useful knowledge, but in all virtue, and godliness of life.

And, finally, we intercede with Thee in behalf of the poor and the afflicted. Do Thou, who art the God of all consolation, provide for them. Send down help from above in every hour of their need; and turn their earthly trials and tribulations to their eternal good. Incline those who are in prosperity, to remember all who are in trouble. Teach as many as are rich in this world, to be ready to communicate; and those, who are strong, to bear with the infirmities of the weak.

Into Thy hands, O LORD, we now commit ourselves, and all who are dear to us; beseeching Thee to hear these our imperfect prayers and intercessions, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our ever blessed Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTH SUNDAY MORNING.

O Lord God Almighty, who didst in the beginning create the heavens and the earth; who rulest the world by Thine unceasing Providence, and orderest all the affairs of men; who hast made us what we are, and hast appointed the time, and the place of our existence; we thank Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life;—We bless Thee, that Thou hast not made the wilderness our habitation, nor a barren land our dwelling-place; but that Thou hast placed us in the midst of plenty, and of enjoyment.

We also adore Thee, that Thou hast given us immortal souls; and that Thou hast made Thyself known unto us, both by the works of Thy hand, and by the express revelation of Thy word. We praise Thee, that, while the heavens declare Thy glory, and the firmament showeth Thy handy-work, Jesus Christ hath also descended from heaven, and hath, still more, revealed Thy grace unto us. We rejoice that Thy power, and Thy greatness, and the excellency of Thy wisdom, and also Thine unspeakable love and mercy to the creatures whom Thou hast made, have been declared to us. We adore Thee for all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in Jesus Christ, especially for the pardon of our sins through faith in His name; and for the hope which is laid up for us in heaven, through His Gospel.

But we desire to lament, O Lord, that we have not rendered unto Thee according to the greatness and

multitude of Thy mercies; for we have walked after the way of our own hearts, and have suffered Thine exceeding grace and goodness to be forgotten by us. Help us, therefore, with unfeigned sorrow, and contrition of heart, to acknowledge our offences against Thee. We confess our worldliness, and thoughtlessness of Thee; our coldness, and indifference in Thy service; our pride, our ambition, and our covetousness. We also acknowledge and lament our too irritable tempers, and angry passions, and our too great readiness to justify ourselves and to find fault with others. We confess our indolence, our waste of time, and our frequent negligence in our employments. We confess, also, all the various sins of our tongues,—our hasty, sudden, as well as flattering and deceitful words. We confess the want of purity and holiness, in our secret thoughts and imaginations. We now pray Thee, O God, to pardon our iniquities, for the sake of that Saviour, in whom Thou hast invited us to trust. And, while we exercise this faith, may we condemn ourselves on account of our transgressions; may we resolve to forsake them, and to walk henceforth in newness of life.

O God, strengthen us, we pray Thee, by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not fall again under the power of our temptations; but that all our ways may be pleasing in Thy sight. O grant, that we who are hearers of Thy word, may also always be doers of it,—lest we fall into tenfold condemnation. May we remember Thine awful punishments denounced against the ungodly, as well as the glorious recompense of reward laid up for those

who seek for it by patient continuance in well-doing. May we, therefore, lay aside every weight, and the sins which do most easily beset us. May we be faithful and diligent; may we put on the whole armour of God and may we fight manfully under the banners of our Saviour, against the world, the flesh, and the Devil; remembering, that to him that overcometh, He will give a crown of life.

Bless unto us the preaching of Thy word this day. Grant that it may sink into all our hearts; and may make us anxious to please Thee, and mindful of our latter end. And whensoever we may come to die, we pray that no terrors may then dismay us; but that we may have so repented of our sins, while we were in life and in health, and have so obeyed the voice of God in His Gospel, that, trusting in the mercies of Him who hath died for us, we may yield up our departing spirit to God who gave it, in the hope of a joyful resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord &c.

FIRST SUNDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, we bless Thee for Thy great goodness, in creating, and preserving, and redeeming us; and for all Thy various mercies, from our birth unto this hour. We adore Thee as the Author of all things; but, especially, as our Father and our friend, the GOD of our lives, the source of our hopes, and the giver of all spiritual as well as temporal good.

We desire to praise Thee, on this Thy holy day, for the gift of JESUS CHRIST Thy Son; by whom we obtain pardon of sin, and all things necessary for our eternal salvation. We thank Thee, that He hath descended into this our world; that He hath set us an example by His holy life; hath made atonement for us by His painful death; and, by His resurrection from the grave on the third day, hath given assurance, that He is able to raise our bodies from the dust, and to exalt us to His own right hand in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We pray Thee, O LORD, to impress deeply on our minds these great and solemn truths, that we may not forget them amidst the cares and occupations of the world; but may be daily reminded of our Christian privileges, as well as of the duties to which we are called. Convince us of the vanity of the world, of the shortness of life, and of the unspeakable importance of eternity. Save us from indifference, and thoughtlessness, and levity; as well as from wickedness and sin. Purify our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit; and teach us

habitually to remember that Thou seest our secret thoughts, and requirest truth in the inward parts.

Pardon, we pray Thee, the multitude of our sins in times past,—our pride and vanity, our covetousness and worldliness, our anger and passion, our indolence and negligence, our too careless performance of the duties of our station, and our want of Christian kindness and of brotherly love. Pardon, especially, our forgetfulness of Thee, our GOD: for how seldom have we thought of Thee; how coldly have we worshipped Thee; how little have we honoured Thee as we ought! Thou hast caused us to abound with the good things of this life:—Thy hand hath protected us:—Thy goodness hath raised us, when, through sickness, or calamity, we have been brought low: and the knowledge of Thy mercies in JESUS CHRIST hath been added to all Thine other blessings: so that we are under peculiar obligations to love and serve Thee, and to praise and magnify Thy holy name. O LORD, forgive our ingratitude to Thee our great Benefactor; and enable us to trust in JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of every sin, as well as for the acceptance of those imperfect services which we would offer up unto Thee.

We pray Thee O LORD, to send Thy blessed Gospel over the world. May the nations hear the joyful sound; and may Thy kingdom come; and Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Bless the labours of Thy ministers in every place. Fill them with zeal for Thine honour, and with love to Thy name. May multitudes in this land repent and believe; and may the spirit of true religion both revive among ourselves, and

overspread all nations. May CHRIST be preached, from the rising to the setting sun: and may each of us endeavour to recommend those truths which we have been taught, that there may be no occasion for the enemies of the Gospel to blaspheme.

We would intercede for all our relations, connexions, and friends; especially for those who are in sorrow, sickness, or trouble. Grant unto them those consolations which Thou only canst bestow. Put into their hearts a holy trust in Thee, and a sure hope in Thy promises. And may those, who feel that their infirmities come upon them, and that their outward frame decays, be enabled to believe, that, when earthly things fail, they shall have a building of GOD, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Take us now, O GOD, under Thy gracious care this night. Let Thy blessing attend us: and Thy good Spirit rest upon us. May the words, which we have heard this day, sink into all our hearts: and may we, through the ensuing week, rise up, and lie down, at peace with Thee, and under a constant sense of Thy presence.

We offer up these our imperfect supplications, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our Mediator and Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SECOND SUNDAY EVENING.

Almighty and everlasting God, our Creator, and Preserver, and Redeemer, we would now enter into Thy sacred presence, under a deep sense of our weakness and unworthiness, and of Thine unspeakable greatness and majesty. We approach Thee, at the same time, as a God of goodness and mercy; for Thou hast made Thyself known to us in Jesus Christ Thy Son; and hast proclaimed pardon to every repenting sinner through faith in that sacrifice which He hath offered on the cross, for us, the guilty children of men. We desire to bless Thee for this strong foundation of our hope; and we would now address Thee in the full assurance of faith, renouncing all confidence in ourselves, rejoicing in Him who is become the hope of all the ends of the earth, and is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;—who, having died for us, hath also risen again, and is now exalted at Thy right hand, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

We beseech Thee, O God, to accept for His sake the imperfect worship which we have on this day offered up in Thy house. We implore Thee to bless to our continual good, the instruction which we have this day heard. Having been taught to know Thy will may we be diligent to fulfil it. Thou hast given us line upon line, and precept upon precept; and hast placed us in the midst of light and knowledge. O grant unto us a true and lively faith in all the doctrines of

Thy holy word, and a spirit of unreserved obedience to them.

We pray Thee to make us diligent and faithful in all the occupations of life, to which in Thy providence we shall be called. Let us not live in indolence and self-indulgence; but let us endeavour to be useful in our generation. Let us be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Let us walk in Thy fear from day to day; and in all things aim to please our heavenly Father. Make us to be the same in secret which we would wish to be in public.

We beseech Thee to inspire us with a spirit of Christian kindness to all around us. Thou hast been very bountiful and gracious to us. Thou hast multiplied our temporal comforts; and Thou pardonest our numberless transgressions. O grant that we may follow the example of Thy beneficence; and that we may also be like Thee, ready to forgive. May we be watchful over ourselves, but tender towards the infirmities of others; full of meekness, and gentleness, and patience, and loving-kindness and charity.

Enlighten us, O Lord, by Thy good Spirit, that we may exercise every holy temper, and understand every part of our Christian duty. Strengthen us in our seasons of trial and temptation; guide us through all the difficulties into which we may fall; and bless us in all the scenes of life through which we may pass. If affliction should come upon us, inspire us with humble resignation to Thy will: Thou, O Lord, dost not willingly grieve the children of men; O visit us not in Thine indignation; but turn the mournful events of Thy providence to our spiritual and endless good.

Prepare us, by all the events of life, for our great and final change; for we know not how soon it may come upon us. May the appointment of Thy sabbaths, and the preaching of Thy word,—may every opportunity of holy meditation, and of public, social, and secret prayer,—and all the other means of edification, which we so abundantly possess, concur with the successive events of Thy wise and merciful providence, in so calling off our minds from this earthly scene, that we may be fitted for that everlasting state, on the borders of which we stand. May Thy good Spirit sustain and strengthen us in our last hours: when the shadows of the evening shall come upon us, when age and sickness shall arrive, and human help shall fail, be Thou, O LORD, the strength of our hearts and our portion for evermore; and let an abundant entrance be ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR.

With these prayers for ourselves, we desire to join our intercessions for others also. Bless our President, and all who are in authority: [*give wisdom to our houses of Congress;*] and inspire all orders of men with the spirit of cheerful obedience to Thy laws. Save us from public war, as well as from intestine discord. Bless every attempt to spread Thy true Gospel among the nations. Have mercy on all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics: and so bring them home, blessed LORD, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of true Israelites: and crown with Thy continual blessing the labours of the ministers of Thy Gospel in our own favoured country.

Have mercy on all who are troubled in mind, or whom Thou hast visited with any sorrow. Grant unto them peace with Thee, through our Lord JESUS CHRIST; and let the light of Thy countenance be more than a compensation for every worldly sacrifice to which they are called.

Be favourable to the rising generation. Keep them from the follies and vanities of youth; and let them learn to walk in Thy fear, and in the way of Thy commandments.

And, finally, we beseech Thee to take us all under Thy protection, this night. Grant unto these our frail bodies that refreshment which is needful for them; and enable us to lie down, exercising a holy trust in Thee, and having fervent charity towards all men.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c

The grace of our Lord, &c.

THIRD SUNDAY EVENING.

O Lord, God Almighty, who understands the secrets of every heart,—who art also a God of infinite perfection and purity, and claimest not only the outward service of Thy creatures, but requirest truth in the inward parts,—we sinners, who in thought, word, and deed, have offended against Thee, desire most humbly to confess our sins, and to implore Thy merciful forgiveness.

We pray Thee to assist us by Thy Holy Spirit, to know wherein we have sinned against Thee. Give us a deep conviction of the necessity of seriously examining ourselves, and of comparing all our ways with the standard of Thy holy law, that we may thus become acquainted with our transgressions: and, freely confessing them before that God whom we have offended, may obtain perfect remission, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

O Lord, we acknowledge that forgetfulness of Thee and that rebellion of our hearts against Thee, which have been the cause of so many disorders in our lives. We have not honoured Thee as God: but have set up our own will as our law; choosing to follow our own vain imaginations. We have neglected Thy written word; we have not duly attended to the instructions of Thy ministers; we have been careless under the means of grace; and little anxious to improve the sabbath to our spiritual edification.

Thou hast called to us by many dispensations of Thy

providence, often reminding us of our latter end. Thou hast shown us the vanity of all our earthly hopes; and hast taught us lessons of wisdom, both by the mercies, and by the afflictions, and all the various trials and disappointments, with which Thou hast visited us. But we have too often repined at Thy dispensations, instead of profiting by them; and have complained of our condition in life instead of turning our thoughts to a happier and better world.

Or if Thou hast multiplied our comforts, how prone have we been to place our chief happiness in these, and not in Thee, who art the Giver! How many and various have been our sins, both secret and open, from our youth until this time! How many have been the sinful thoughts which we have indulged; of which Thou, and Thou only, hast been the witness; for which also unless they are repented of in this world, Thou wilt call us to account in the Day of Judgment! How many rash and angry words, also, have we continually spoken! How often have we injured our neighbours; judging harshly of others, while we hope to be judged mercifully by Thee;—not willing to forgive, though we ourselves hope to be forgiven!

We would confess, O Lord, the ungodliness of our hearts and lives, and the frequent impatience of our spirits. Thou hast appointed our lot in life, and hast ordered all things concerning us: but how little have we adorned the stations in which Thou hast placed us! —how unfaithfully have we employed the talents entrusted to us: and how soon have we been weary in well-doing!

We pray Thee, O LORD, to make us duly sensible of all the sins, whereby we have offended against Thee; and give us grace to repent and turn to Thee; and to believe in the name of our Lord JESUS CHRIST; and to walk in newness of life. We thank Thee, that, on each returning sabbath, there is forgiveness preached to us in our Saviour's name; that we are encouraged to confess our sins; to renew our repentance; and to call upon the LORD, our God. And, O LORD, grant unto us, together with the pardon of our sins, the aid of Thy Spirit, that whatever truths we have heard this day, may make a serious and lasting impression; and that whatever sins have been this day brought to our remembrance, may be repented of and forsaken.

May we be enabled especially to contend against those sins which have most easily beset us. O LORD, bless us in the ensuing week. May it be spent in a manner worthy of our Christian profession, and of these our supplications unto Thee. Be Thou our counsellor and guide, and our defender in whom we trust. Do Thou guard us throughout the week from all dangers: and continually keep us in all our ways. Do Thou maintain Thy grace in us; and bring us at length to Thine everlasting kingdom, through our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTH SUNDAY EVENING

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, we beseech Thee to accept the worship which we have rendered unto Thee on this Thy holy day. Give Thine abundant blessing to all the means of grace; and impart unto us a full conviction of those doctrines of Thy Gospel which have been delivered to us. May they not only excite our fears and hopes, while the sound of them is yet in our ears; but may they be engraven on all our hearts, by the power of Thy Holy Spirit.

Thou hast favoured us with many and great advantages. Thou hast given us Thy sabbaths. Thou hast enlightened us by Thy holy word. Thou hast sent us ministers instructed in Thy truths, and hast multiplied our opportunities of edification. Thou hast removed from us many obstacles which others meet with in their heavenly course and hast made our way plain before us

We bless Thee, O Lord, for these unspeakable mercies; but we would rejoice with trembling; knowing that unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required. O Lord, grant unto us Thy Holy Spirit; to enlighten our darkness, to strengthen our weakness, and to supply all that is wanting in us for our spiritual necessities, and for the everlasting salvation of our souls.

We beseech Thee to manifest to all our hearts the abounding grace and love of Christ, that we may be delivered from slavish fears, and may advance with cheerful and willing steps in the way of Thy command

ments. Give us that hope, which is the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. Vouchsafe unto us that most excellent gift of charity, without which we are but as the sounding brass, and the tinkling cymbal. May we more plainly perceive, and more often reflect on, the cause of our having so imperfectly obeyed Thee in times past:—O God, we have not loved Thee,—and, therefore we have not served Thee,—as we ought. Our hearts have been too cold, and insensible;—Christ, our Saviour hath died for us; but we have remained little affected by all that He did and suffered for us.

O do Thou impress upon us those all-powerful doctrines of Thy word which are able to draw our hearts to Thee: and especially, may redeeming love, that great theme of the Gospel, be the favourite subject of our meditation. And grant, O Lord, that, having learnt to love Thee for Thine unspeakable mercies in Jesus Christ, and having obtained an interest in His salvation, we may have the consolation of trusting, that we are safe in life, in death, and in eternity. May we pass through all the future scenes of life, secure from the sins by which we have been overcome; and having surmounted some of the trials which once threatened us, may the recollection be an encouragement for us to trust, that we shall, in due time, triumph over them all.

Give us such a deep sense of our obligations to our blessed Saviour, and such a stedfast hope of immortal life through Him, that no temptations may prevail over us. May we be occupied, whenever we may have seasons of retirement, by the hope of heaven, and the love

of Christ; and when we are engaged in business in the world, may our love to Thee inspire us with such continual zeal in doing good, and such holy activity in our calling, that we may be preserved from those snares to which the careless and the profane are constantly exposed. And thus may we pass on through life: growing in grace; attached more and more to every principle of the Gospel; looking to the Author and Finisher of our faith; and anticipating a happy resurrection. O may we hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and, in the ensuing week, may we remember what this day we have been taught; and may we obtain of Thee, by daily prayer, the constant aid of Thy heavenly grace: we ask it for JESUS CHRIST our Saviour's sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTH SUNDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful GOD, who hast encouraged and commanded us in Thy word, both to make known our wants, and to confess our sins, unto Thee, —we desire now to approach the throne of Thy grace, deeply sensible of our manifold necessities, and imploring Thy forgiving mercy.

We beseech Thee to have compassion upon us for the sake of Thy SON JESUS CHRIST. Blessed be Thy name for this great Mediator between God and man; through whom alone we hope for acceptance in our prayers; and for all things necessary, both for the body and the soul. We have sinned grievously against Thee; we have trespassed in thought, word, and deed. We have left undone that which we ought to have done; as well as done that which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. We cannot tell how often we have offended. O LORD, cleanse Thou us from our secret faults. Teach us to know ourselves, that we may more fully understand our great unworthiness; and more entirely rely on Thy grace in JESUS CHRIST

We would especially lament the sins of the past week. We profess, day by day, to amend our lives: but we too often leave a great part of our duty unperformed: we yield to indolence and negligence; to selfishness and covetousness; to our evil tempers, and to many sins which most easily beset us; and our daily repentance is incomplete. Assist us now to acknowledge, with deep contrition of soul, the guilt which we

have incurred; that we may obtain perfect remission through that Saviour in whom Thou hast encouraged us to hope.

And grant unto us, for His sake, the gift of Thy Holy Spirit; that we may be enabled to advance in our Christian course, and prevail over the enemies of our souls. Save us from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Give us strength, that we may fight under the banners of our Saviour; and may be made more than conquerors over every temptation. May we become habitually fearful of sinning against Thee, and diligent in every good work.

We beseech Thee to grant Thy blessing to the words which we have heard this day; that they may be grafted inwardly in all our hearts; and may bring forth in us the fruit of good living. May our faith be strengthened by every religious exercise in which we engage; and may the successive sabbaths, with which we are favoured here on earth, prepare us for an eternal sabbath, in Thine immediate presence in heaven.

Give success to every endeavour which has been made on this day to bring sinners to repentance. O let Thy name be known on earth, Thy saving health to all nations. May they who sit in darkness behold the Sun of Righteousness arise; and may Thy word every where be glorified.

We pray for all who are appointed to dispense Thy truth Do Thou, O Lord, so enlighten them by Thy grace, that they may be able to instruct others, and lead them safely forward in the way of everlasting life.

Have mercy on the land in which we live. Bless

our President. [*Direct the consultations of our Houses of Congress.*] Inspire our magistrates with integrity, and our people with the spirit of obedience. Have pity on the poor and the afflicted. Bestow Thy blessing on the rising generation. May they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and advance not only in useful knowledge, but in all virtue and godliness of life

Finally, we pray for our Christian friends, and for all our dear relations. Being united in the bonds of Christian love, may we all seek each other's welfare, and bear each other's burthens, and thus fulfil the law of CHRIST. May those, who are strong, have grace to bear with the infirmities of the weak; and may we severally minister to each other's necessities, according to our opportunity and ability.

We present these our imperfect prayers, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIRST EVENING.

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, who art the Maker of all things, and the Judge of all men, we Thy creatures, who live upon Thy daily bounty, and are accountable to Thee for all we do, desire now to offer up our acknowledgments of Thy goodness during the past day, and to implore Thy forgiving mercy.

We would lament the trespasses which we have, this day, committed. Thou seest, O Lord, all our hearts We are blind and ignorant, prone to error, yet impatient of reproof. We often deceive ourselves with the mere appearance of goodness; but Thou knowest every false way in which we allow ourselves to walk. Pardon, we beseech Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake, whatever evil we have either said, or thought, or done, on this day. Pardon all the multitude of our iniquities. Teach us continually to examine our lives by the light of Thine unerring word; and vouchsafe unto us true repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ.

We pray Thee, also, to pour out upon us the gift of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may amend our ways, and walk in newness of life. Thou hast favoured us with much religious knowledge, and with many means of grace. O let us remember, that, unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required. Let us not live, as the children of this world, employing our time in vain and unprofitable things; but let us endeavour to be useful in that station in which Thou hast placed us. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so let us

walk in Him. May we excel especially in those tempers, and abound in those works, which His Gospel has required. May we be full of meekness and patience, of kindness and forbearance, of benevolence and charity. Being established in the love of GOD, may we also love our neighbour with a pure heart, fervently. Let us not have a name to live, while we are dead; or possess only that faith which is without works, and can profit neither ourselves nor those around us; but let us abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by JESUS CHRIST, to the praise and glory of GOD.

We also beseech Thee to bless unto us the events of Thy providence: and so to order all things, during the remainder of our lives, that they may issue in our eternal good. We know not what a day may bring forth. O sanctify unto us our prosperity, and our adversity; our sickness, and our health, and whatever may be the vicissitudes which Thou art pleased to send, may we consider them as coming from Thy fatherly hand, and never repine under them. May we maintain a cheerful and contented mind; and being reconciled to Thee our GOD, may we enjoy peace within ourselves, and be in charity with all men.

These our imperfect supplications we humbly present in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SECOND EVENING.

O Lord, God Almighty, who knowest all things and understandest the secrets of every heart, suit Thy mercies, we pray, to our necessities; and grant unto all the members of this family such things as Thou seest to be most needful for us.

We pray Thee especially to bring our hearts into full obedience to Thy Gospel. Take away from us all pride, impenitency, and unbelief: all undue love of this present world, all inordinate affection, and every evil inclination. Take from us every thing which opposes itself to the knowledge of Thy truth: and is contrary to the Spirit of Thy grace.

May we humble ourselves as children in Thy sight: receiving, in sincerity and simplicity of heart, the various doctrines of Thy word. Give us, also, grace to maintain a Christian spirit, and to abound in every good work. May we be patient, and contented, thankful for our lot in life; praising and blessing Thee for all our providential as well as spiritual mercies; imploring the continuance of Thy favour; and jealous over ourselves, lest, by any evil habits which we indulge, we draw down Thine anger upon us. Make us strict in our ntegrity, sincere in every word, faithful in every trust, ailigent in every duty, amiable in every temper of our lives. May we be zealous to do honour to the cause of Thy Gospel; and thus to recommend the religion of Christ.

O teach us to exercise all those virtues which shone

so brightly in our LORD. At the same time, may we remember our exceeding sinfulness; and thus learn to bear with all the various infirmities of others. Give us grace, also, to testify, on suitable occasions, our abhorrence of evil; and give us courage and integrity to exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and teach us, in the spirit of love, to serve and edify one another.

And now, O LORD, wherever on this day we have failed in the performance of our duty, and in the exercise of any Christian temper, or wherever we have in any respect offended Thee, we implore Thy pardon, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Take us under Thy protection this night; may we be safe under the shadow of Thy wings; may we commit ourselves to Thee, in peace and comfort; may the Gospel be our consolation, in our lying down, and in our rising up:—may it be an ever-present source of happiness to us:—may it lighten every trial, and reconcile us to every disappointment. May there be no place or time, no situation or circumstance, when the satisfaction, which it imparts, shall entirely leave us: but, being under its blessed influence, may our hearts be ever filled with thankfulness; and our lips, with praises.

We ask every blessing, in the name of JESUS CHRIST our only Saviour and Mediator

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

THIRD EVENING.

GREAT AND GLORIOUS GOD, we adore Thee for all Thine infinite perfections! Righteous art Thou in all Thy ways, and holy in all Thy works! We are weak and helpless, sinful and guilty, exposed to danger on every side; and in continual need of Thy gracious assistance.

Grant unto us a due sense of our dependence upon Thee; and enable us to lie down to rest, exercising faith in Thy divine power, and in Thy never-failing goodness. We desire to remember, that Thine eye seeth us wheresoever we are; that Thou art about our bed, and art every where present with us. O LORD, pardon, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake, the sins which Thou hast seen in us this day. Many are the offences which we continually commit: for we are, by nature, prone to evil; and our own hearts too often deceive us. But we desire to trust in the all-powerful mediation of Thy blessed Son; who died for our sins and rose again for our justification; and who ever liveth at Thy right hand to make intercession for us. O LORD, grant unto us peace with Thee, and a cheerful hope of being finally made partakers of everlasting life. We beseech Thee to give us Thy Holy Spirit, to comfort us; and also to dispose us to every good work.

Let us not return to sin, nor love the ways of ungodliness. Let us not allow ourselves in any of those things which Thou hast forbidden;—but let us mortify

all our corrupt affections; our pride and vanity; our anger and passion; our selfishness and worldliness. Let us put on, as the elect of GOD, mercy and loving-kindness, and tender compassion towards all men. Let us follow the example of our Saviour's lowliness and meekness, of His holy zeal, His constant beneficence, His love to the bodies and souls of men. Let us daily improve, through Thy grace, in every Christian temper; and let us exercise ourselves in repentance for whatever we have done amiss.

Accept our thanks, O LORD, for the mercies of the past day, and for all Thy goodness during our past lives. We bless Thee for every gift which Thou hast bestowed upon us; for every deliverance which Thou hast wrought out for any of us from pain and sickness, from sorrow and from danger; and for every event which Thou hast caused to work for our good. Be with us, we pray Thee, to the end of our days. Bless to us all the estates of life through which we pass; make us humble in prosperity, and patient in adversity; grateful for all Thy temporal mercies; but especially for Thine unspeakable love in our redemption through JESUS CHRIST.

We commit to Thy gracious care all our friends and relations. May we live in peace and harmony with them all; bearing each other's burthens, helping each other's infirmities, and ministering to each other's temporal and spiritual good.

Have compassion on the children of this family Save them from the follies and dangers of youth, and make them obedient in all things. Prepare them for

Thy future service; and when they shall have done Thy will on earth, may they be joint heirs with us in that inheritance which Thou hast prepared for all who love Thee.

Hear us, O LORD, in these our prayers, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD! Thou art unspeakably great and glorious! Thou art the King, Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible! Thy throne is in the highest heavens; and Thou art exalted above all blessing and praise:—we, the creatures whom Thy hand hath made, and whom Thy providence sustains from day to day, desire at this time humbly to bow down before Thy divine majesty; and to acknowledge our obligations to Thine infinite goodness and mercy.

We bless Thee for all the comforts of this life, but, above all, for Thine inestimable love in sending Thy Son from heaven to become the Saviour of our souls. We thank Thee for having provided this Mediator, through whom sinners may draw near unto Thee. We beseech Thee, O LORD, to grant unto us pardon of our sins through JESUS CHRIST. Remember not against us

the transgressions either of this day or of our former lives; but be Thou pleased to receive us into Thy favour, and to adopt us into Thy family, as members of Christ, as children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. And vouchsafe unto us the gift of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled to love Thee with all our hearts; and faithfully to perform Thy righteous will. We beseech Thee to renew us in the spirit of our minds. Help us to put off that old man, which is corrupt according to the flesh; and to put on that new man which is created after Thine own image in righteousness and true holiness. Deliver us from blindness and hardness of heart; from too great a love of this present world; as well as from coldness and indolence in Thy service. May Thy blessed Spirit produce in us a deep and sincere repentance; and make us fruitful in every good word and work.

We also pray Thee to enable us to put our whole confidence in Thee. May we commit all our concerns into Thy merciful hands, who art ever ready to protect those who sincerely love and serve Thee. Let Thy watchful providence defend us by night and by day, in adversity and prosperity, in sickness and in health; and, whenever the awful hour of our death shall draw near, may we find our consolations in CHRIST abound.

We most humbly address Thee, in behalf of all those for whom it is our duty to pray. We would intercede with Thee for our native land, that it may still be favoured with the light of Thy Gospel; and that the seeds of divine knowledge sown in it may bring forth abundant fruit. Bless the President of these United

States, and all in authority; and give them wisdom to fulfil the arduous duties to which they are called. Have mercy on all who are in any sorrow; on the widows, and the fatherless, and on those who have none to help them. Look down with compassion on those who suffer from the calamities of war. Be merciful to our dear friends and relations. Let the light of Thy Gospel shine into all their hearts. Grant, that they may be now united with us in the bonds of Christian love; and that we may all be members of Thy blessed family in heaven.

We pray Thee to take us under Thy care this night. We are unable to protect ourselves; but Thou, LORD, art ever present with us. O hear us from heaven Thy dwelling-place; and, for Thy mercy's sake, bestow upon us more than we are able to ask, or think, or are worthy to receive.

We present these our humble and imperfect prayers, in the name of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet hast promised forgiveness to all those who repent of the evil which they have done,—we draw near to Thee under a deep sense of our unworthiness, for we have transgressed in thought, word, and deed; and when we look back on our past lives, we are confounded by the multitude of our offences. Many have been the sins, of which Thou, and Thou only, hast been the witness. O LORD, save us from that wrath which we have merited. Thou willest not the death of a sinner; but, rather, that he should turn from his wickedness and live. Fulfil towards each of us those gracious promises which Thou hast made in JESUS CHRIST: and enable us to rejoice, in the sense of Thy favour here, and in the hope of eternal life in the world to come.

And lest, through our frailty, we should again yield to the power of our manifold temptations, grant unto us both the guidance of Thy providence and the help of Thy Holy Spirit. Put into our hearts good desires, and enable us, by Thy grace, to bring the same to good effect. Correct whatever is amiss in us. Deliver us from pride and vanity, and from the too great love of earthly things; from that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and from all inordinate indulgence. Save us from envy, hatred, and malice. Let not the sun go down upon our wrath. Let us go to rest, this night, full of charity and benevolence; and maintaining a

conscience void of offence towards Thee and towards all men May our hearts be a fit habitation for Thy Spirit; and may our souls and bodies be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord JESUS CHRIST

With these prayers for ourselves, we offer up our intercessions for others also. Let the light of Thy Gospel shine upon all mankind. Have mercy on this land. Bless our President, and all in authority under him. Strengthen their hands, that they may effectually repress wickedness and vice; and maintain Thy true religion among us. Give grace to all ministers of the Gospel, that they may both preach Thy word, and be examples of virtue and godliness. Send down Thy blessing, both temporal and spiritual, upon our several relations and friends; and unite with us in Christian bonds those who are already joined to us by the ties of nature and affection. Be merciful to those who are in any trouble of mind, body, or estate.

Regard in tender compassion the young of this family. May they daily learn the fear of the Lord; and may they ever walk in Thy commandments.

We now beseech Thee to continue to us Thy gracious protection through this night. Into Thy hand we commend our bodies, and our souls; our temporal, and our eternal interests. Thou, O LORD, neither slumberest nor sleepest:—O take us all under Thy special care:—defend us from every danger; and grant us such refreshing sleep, that we may be fitted for the duties of the following day. And give us grace so to live, that we may never be afraid to die; but that whether we live, we may live unto the Lord; or whether we

die, we may die unto the Lord :—all which we ask in the name, and through the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, our blessed Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

SIXTH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLIVING GOD, Author of our being, supporter of our lives, and source of all our hopes both in this world and in that which is to come :—we lift up our evening prayer to Thee, in acknowledgment of Thy divine goodness, and of our continual dependence upon Thee.

We thank Thee for Thy merciful protection this day By Thee have we been sustained ever since we were born; and by Thy gracious care we are now enabled to lie down in peace. Blessed be Thy name if we have been in any measure preserved from evil. We are exposed to dangers on every side; to innumerable ills, which afflict the body; and to many sorrows of the mind. We live in the midst of an ensnaring world, our own hearts are ever ready to deceive us; and our great spiritual adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour. O LORD, our hope and confidence are only in Thee. Be Thou unto us a rock of defence that we may be saved from the power of our enemies In

every season of temptation, in the period of adversity in the time also of prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, good LORD, deliver us!

We beseech Thee to pardon the sins which we have this day committed. Although we profess to love Thy name, yet, in how many things do we continue to offend. We often hear Thy holy word; we are instructed in every part of Thy sacred truth:—but how little fruit do we bring forth which is worthy of our Christian calling; and of that care which Thou in Thy providence and grace, hast bestowed upon us! We earnestly implore Thy pardon, in the name of JESUS CHRIST. Be Thou merciful to us, for our Saviour's sake; and send Thy Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may more deeply repent, and may reform our lives, and be disciples of CHRIST not in name only, but in deed and in truth.

Be pleased to sanctify to the good of our souls whatsoever events have befallen us on this day. May we be gathering wisdom from the scenes which we see around us. When we behold instances of patience and long-suffering, of meekness and gentleness, of loving-kindness and charity, may we follow them: and when we witness the mortality of others, may we be reminded that our time also is short; and that blessed is that man whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.

Bless, we earnestly beseech Thee, our several friends and relations. Be Thou bountiful to our benefactors.

Show Thy special mercy to the children of this family. Give wisdom to those who shall be appointed to instruct them; and provide for them friends who shall

guide them in the right way, and shall prove a blessing to the end of their lives.

We pray for the President of the United States, that he may experience Thy best blessings: [*for our Congress, that their counsels may be directed to our true interests, and to Thy glory:*] for our magistrates, that they may not fail to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them who do well: for the ministers of the Gospel, that they may go forth in Thy strength, and preach Thy pure and unadulterated word, and have abundant success: for our great men, that they may be examples of virtue to those beneath them: for the poor, that they may be preserved from repining at their lot, and may live in all godliness and honesty: and for those who are sick or in trouble, that they may patiently endure the afflictions of the Lord, and in due time find deliverance. We thus commend to Thy gracious care both ourselves and others; and we desire to lie down in perfect charity with all men.

O Lord, hear us in these our prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake; to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SEVENTH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, who seest all our thoughts, and words, and works, and who wilt judge us at the last day; we beseech Thee to pardon whatsoever sins we have this day committed against Thy divine majesty; and to give us grace to examine ourselves, that we may know wherein we have offended against Thee.

We fear that we have this day done many things which we ought not to have done; and have left undone many things which we ought to have done: that we may have indulged our pride, and our evil tempers; and harboured many sinful thoughts: that we may have been negligent in the performance of the duties of our station; and may have omitted opportunities of doing good. We profess to be Thy servants; but how great a part of our duty do we often leave unperformed! O pardon our offences, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake; and teach us continually to amend our lives, that we may become His disciples, not in name only, but in deed and in truth.

We pray Thee to take us under Thy gracious care this night: we are surrounded by dangers; and are at all times unable to help ourselves; but the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee; and Thou art ever present with those who put their trust in Thee. How many are there who will pass this night in sorrow and in pain! How many, who will mourn through the dis

quietude of their hearts; and are without any sure hope in their God! O Lord, grant unto us, if it please Thee, refreshing rest; but, especially, teach us to put our trust in Thee.

Enable us to rejoice in our most merciful Saviour, amidst all the trials which we may meet with here; and to look forward with humble and cheerful hope, to the great day of our appearing before Thee. May we know in whom we have believed: and may our souls be safe in the hands of that Redeemer to whom we have committed them; and in whose merits alone we desire to trust. Accept, also, for His sake, the imperfect services of this day; pardon what hath been evil in us; and look down with favour on whatsoever hath been good; since we present unto Thee even our best works only in the name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son.

We beseech Thee to have mercy on our dear friends and relations; to relieve their sorrows, and to supply their wants, as well as to direct their steps. Grant unto them a lively faith in the promises of Thy Gospel; and make them fruitful in every good work.

We pray for our President, and country. O Lord, deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and direct the public measures to our true interests and to Thy glory.

Have pity on the poor, the desolate, and the oppressed. Be Thou a father to the fatherless; and a God of consolation to the widow. Look down with an eye of favour on the rising generation; and raise Thou up a seed to serve Thee who shall hand down Thy truth to the latest posterity.

Bless especially the children of this family; may they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; may they be submissive and dutiful in all things, may they live in harmony and love, one towards another; may they be kept from the contagion of the world; and, after a life of holy obedience to Thy laws, may they all be made members of Thy blessed family above

O LORD, pardon the infirmity of these our prayers: and answer us, not according to what we either desire or deserve, but according to the riches of Thy grace in JESUS CHRIST; for whom we bless Thee, and to whom, with THEE, and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, world without end.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c

EIGHTH EVENING.

O Lord God Almighty, Father of mercies, from whom we derive the temporal comforts which we enjoy, and to whom we owe the blessed and glorious hope of everlasting life, we desire to render unto Thee this our evening sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving. We acknowledge Thy goodness to us during the past day; and we beseech Thee to continue to us Thy gracious protection during the darkness and silence of the approaching night. Thou art ever present with us. Thou sustainest our lives, though we see Thee not. Thou art our protection in all dangers. Thou art our support in trouble; our guide in difficulty; our best consolation in time of sickness; and our only refuge in the hour of death.

We pray Thee to increase our trust and confidence in Thee. Deliver us from the love of this changeful and uncertain world. Strengthen our faith in the great promises of Thy Gospel; and grant that, having committed ourselves to Thy mercies in Jesus Christ, we may find in Him continual rest, and peace.

We beseech Thee, for His sake, to pardon whatever sins we have this day committed against Thee. Although we profess to know Thy word, and to live in obedience to Thy will, in how many things do we continue to offend. We are often slothful in the performance of our duties: we fail to watch against our peculiar temptations; we yield to the evil example of those around us; we gratify our pride: we indulge our evil

tempers; we renew our sins, to the great disquiet of our souls. O Lord, forgive, for Jesus Christ's sake, the offences of this day; and pour out upon us Thy Holy Spirit; that we may become more stedfast and zealous in Thy service, and more diligent in every good work.

We commit to Thy gracious and fatherly care all those for whom it is our duty to pray. Have compassion on our dearest relations and friends. Supply their various wants through the riches of Thy mercy in Jesus Christ.

Bless our President, and all who are in authority; and give them wisdom to fulfil the arduous duties to which they are called.

Be merciful to all who are in sorrow. Look down with pity on those who suffer through the calamities of war; on prisoners and captives; and on all who are destitute and oppressed. Bestow Thy special favour on Thine afflicted servants; and cause their earthly troubles to issue in their eternal joy.

Have mercy on the young: may there be never wanting in this land a seed to serve Thee; and may those who shall come after us, obtain from Thee an increase of light and knowledge, as well as of faith, and hope, and love; that the fruits of righteousness may abound; and the excellency of Thy Gospel may be more and more manifested in the world.

We present unto Thee these our imperfect supplications, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

NINTH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, by whose power we were created, by whose providence we are sustained, and by whose grace in CHRIST we are made heirs of eternal life; we desire to bless Thee for all Thy mercies, both temporal and spiritual; and, especially, for Thy goodness to us on the day which is now past.

We thank Thee for our food and raiment; for our various comforts and enjoyments; for our freedom from pain and sorrow; and for our deliverance from many of those temptations which are common in the world. We bless Thee, also, for the religious advantages which we so abundantly enjoy; for the light which shines around us; for the various means of grace; and for the gift of Thy written word.

We desire, at the same time, to confess our numberless sins. We have trespassed in thought, word, and deed: we have done that which we ought not to have done; we have left undone that which we ought to have done; and our only hope is in Thy mercy. Pardon, O LORD, for CHRIST'S sake, all the evil which we have committed on this day. Forgive whatever pride and vanity we may have indulged: whatever anger and passion, whatever fretfulness and impatience, we may have betrayed; and whatever evil thoughts we may have harboured in our minds. Pardon, also, the various sins of our tongues, by which we so often violate the law of charity towards our neighbour. We plead the merits of JESUS CHRIST, Thy Son; and we would

rejoice, that there is this great Mediator between God and man, through whom there is perfect remission of sins for all those, who, with penitent and contrite hearts, confess their trespasses against Thee.

And grant, we beseech Thee, that we may endeavour continually to amend our lives, and to walk in the way of Thy commandments. Put within us Thy Holy Spirit, that we may turn from every sin; and may delight in doing the will of our heavenly Father. Make us humble and lowly, kind and benevolent, and fruitful in every good work. May we follow the example of our blessed SAVIOUR, who went about doing good; and, remembering how short is the time of our sojourning here on earth, may we use all diligence both in serving others, and in making our own calling and election sure.

We desire, also, before we lay down to rest, to commend to Thy grace and Thy care all our dear friends and relations. We beseech Thee to protect them from all evil: and to grant unto them all things convenient for them; and, when they shall have experienced Thy favour here, to bring them to Thine everlasting Kingdom.

Bless the children of this family:—strengthen them, that they may resist sin; may overcome the world; may deny themselves; and bring forth fruit in their lives to the praise and glory of Thy name.

And, finally, we implore Thy blessing on our President and country, [*on our Congress,*] our magistrates, our ministers of the Gospel, and all orders of men among us. Teach us to fill up our stations with fidel-

ity; and to walk in the fear of God, and in charity towards all men.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers and supplications, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TENTH EVENING.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, Almighty and most merciful God, we are met together to offer as a Christian family our united prayers and supplications unto Thee. Thou understandest the secrets of all our hearts. Thou hast known all the circumstances of our past lives; and art acquainted with the present disposition of all our minds. Thou knowest whether we are of the number of those who live in thoughtlessness and forgetfulness of Thee, and persist in their impenitence, not seeing their danger: or whether we are of that happy number, who have embraced Thy Gospel with true contrition of heart; and have obeyed its solemn call to repentance and newness of life.

O Lord, suffer not that any of us should harden our

hearts against Thee. May we fear, lest death should overtake us in our sins. and, if we are yet negligent of the things which make for our everlasting peace, may we begin to seek the salvation of our souls, with earnestness and anxiety. But, if any of us have already received Thy truth in the love of it; if any of us have already repented truly of our sins, and begun to lead a new life, and to walk in the way of Thy commandments, we pray that we may learn to follow them to the end, fully.

O Lord, how great is the privilege of those who can thus look up with holy confidence unto Thee! How blessed are they who have Him for their friend, who made heaven and earth, and hath all things under His government! We pray Thee to receive us into Thy favour; to adopt us into Thy family; and to make all things work together for our good.

Having sought, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, may all other things be added unto us May Thy merciful providence direct the events of our lives. May Thine arm be stretched out to protect us May Thy Spirit sustain and strengthen us; and, if it should please Thee to visit us with trials and afflictions, may Thy grace sanctify all our sorrows; and cause them to be instrumental to our eternal benefit.

We now commit ourselves to Thee for this night; earnestly beseeching Thee to pardon our sins, and to take us under Thy gracious protection. May we rise in the morning with every good desire growing up in us: and go to the duties of the following day, remembering, that we are candidates for a heavenly prize;

and looking, beyond these temporal things, to a better and more enduring inheritance.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

ELEVENTH EVENING.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who art the God of our lives, the author of all our happiness, and the only source from which we can derive any true consolation and hope :—and who hast also declared in Thy word, that Thou hearest the prayers of Thy creatures, and art rich in mercy unto all who devoutly call upon Thee ;—encouraged by Thy gracious promises, we sinners, hopeless in ourselves, and exposed to Thy just condemnation, presume to call upon Thy name and to implore Thy blessing and Thy mercy.

We confess, that we have all trespassed against Thee. We have sinned by our early forgetfulness of Thee ; our iniquities have advanced with our advancing years ; and if we now attempt to recollect all the evil which we have done, we are confounded by the multitude of our offences. We confess, that we have been vain and worldly : proud and self-willed ; professing

indeed, the Christian faith; but too much engrossed by the present world, and too thoughtless of eternity; inclined to cherish delusive hopes of much earthly good; eager also for reputation with our fellow-creatures; but little anxious to please Thee, and to secure our everlasting salvation.

We lament especially that though Thy Gospel hath been preached to us, we have heard it with so much indifference. We lament that, notwithstanding the powerful nature of its doctrines, we have been so little affected by it; so often refusing to follow Thy will and the precepts of CHRIST: choosing, rather, to live according to the will of men, and the corrupt customs of this sinful world. O LORD, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may not remain insensible to Thy mercies in JESUS CHRIST. May we lie down this night deeply affected with the importance of eternity; and resolved to give up our future lives to that GOD who made us, and to that SAVIOUR who hath redeemed us by His most precious blood.

We desire, also, to thank Thee for Thy many temporal gifts. Blessed be Thy name for all the mercies which we have experienced this day—for our health and strength—for our food and raiment—for the various accommodations and comforts of this mortal life. We are not worthy, O LORD, of the least of all Thy bounties. May we be enabled to view them as the gifts of our reconciled Father: and, while we enjoy these earthly blessings, may we look forward, with cheerful and humble hope, to those greater things, which, as yet, eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered

into the heart of man to conceive; but which Thou hast prepared for them who love Thee.

Accept, for our Saviour's sake, whatever we may have done this day in any measure according to Thy commands; and receive these our imperfect prayers which we offer in His name.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWELFTH EVENING.

O Lord God, our heavenly Father, we are met together as a Christian family, to thank Thee for the mercies of the past day, and to implore Thy blessing before we lie down to rest. We would ever remember the frailty of our nature: and our utter uncertainty how long we may have to live. We are placed in this world for a short season, and must soon enter into eternity. We must go to the Father of our spirits, and give account of all things done in the body, and must then receive our eternal doom.

O may this awful thought return to our minds with each returning day; that we may enter upon our duties, reflecting on the ends for which we were born: and may lie down each night, examining whether we are so passing our time on earth, as we shall wish we

had done—when we are about to die, and to appear before Thy tribunal.

We pray Thee, O LORD, to give us a sacred jealousy over ourselves; lest we fall short of our heavenly calling. May we learn to put our whole trust in Thee, and to place our delight in serving Thee. Pardon all our disobedience in the time past:—pardon our many negligences, as well as sins:—pardon the wasted time, the idle words, and the evil tempers of this day.

We would lie down, trusting in the merits of JESUS CHRIST our Lord; in whose gracious promises to every repenting sinner we place all our hope. And while we thus commend our souls to Thy mercies in Christ, to Thee do we commit all our worldly affairs. In Thine hand, O LORD, whose providence it is that bringeth every thing to pass, we leave the issue of all our undertakings; for Thou knowest, better than ourselves, what is for our good.

We beseech Thee to bless us with all spiritual blessings; and to sanctify to us the daily events of our lives. We pray Thee to lay upon us no greater burthen than we are able to bear; and to train us, by Thy merciful goodness and Thy tender care, for the performance of better services than we have yet rendered Thee in the world. We pray for strength against every temptation; and for final victory over every sin. Arm us for every conflict, fit us for every duty which we have to fulfil. Let us diligently perform our work in life; let us, at the same time, live in peace and love, and abound in all offices of kindness to each other.

O LORD, unite us as one Christian family together

May we be partakers of the same faith; and heirs of the same hope. May our united prayers continually ascend to the throne of Thy heavenly grace; and may Thy blessing rest upon us.

Hear us, we beseech Thee, in these our humble supplications, for JESUS CHRIST our Saviour's sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

THIRTEENTH EVENING.

O GOD, who of Thy tender mercy didst send Thy Son JESUS CHRIST into the world to die for our sins we beseech Thee to bestow upon us all those abundant blessings, which, through Him, Thou hast provided for the children of men. Numberless are our wants; and we would, therefore, daily abound in supplication and prayer. We pray Thee to bestow upon us all things which Thou knowest to be needful for us: to carry us in safety through this life, and to bring us to the end of our days in peace. We pray Thee to protect us in all dangers; to guide us in all our difficulties; to sustain us in all our temptations and trials; and to lay upon us no greater burthen than we are able to bear. We pray Thee to support us with Thy heavenly grace; to strengthen our faith; to animate our hope; and to enlarge our charity. We pray Thee to impress upon us

every doctrine of Thy Gospel, and thus to purify our hearts.

We thank Thee, O Heavenly Father, that, for us sinners, who have wandered from Thy flock, and have all gone out of the way, Thou hast provided the blessing of salvation. May we resign all our affairs to that merciful God, who, having rescued our souls from destruction, and shown us the path of life, hath promised also, that all things shall work together for good to them who love Him.

And, while we trust Thee, let us also diligently obey Thee. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, may we think of these things. Fill us, O Lord, with compassion to our fellow-creatures; even as Thou hast had compassion on us. Give us hearts to deny ourselves; and to be kind and liberal to others; always remembering, that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

We beseech Thee to give us tender consciences, that we may flee from all evil. We desire, as much as is possible in this state of trial, to be kept in paths of safety; we ask not for wealth, reputation, honour, or prosperity; but we pray for a calm and peaceful spirit; for every opportunity of leading a holy life; and for such circumstances in this world as may be most free from temptation. We pray for Thy preserving grace, for holiness of life, and for eternal salvation at the last

Pardon, we now beseech Thee, all the sins of the past day: and grant, that, before we lie down to rest, we may repent sincerely of the evil which we have

done, and, also, of our neglect of the good which we might have done. And we would implore both the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our imperfect services, in the name of our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTEENTH EVENING.

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, whose mercies are over all Thy works, and who hast, on this day, supplied our returning wants, we render thanks to Thee for all the bounties of Thy providence; and we desire now to lie down under a deep sense both of our own unworthiness, and of Thine unspeakable goodness.

We adore Thee, especially, for the gift of Jesus Christ, Thy Son; through whom we hope for the pardon of our sins, and the gift of everlasting life. We are all sinners in Thy sight; and are exposed to Thy just condemnation; but, though our offences have abounded, yet Thy grace hath still more abounded through Jesus Christ.

We desire to confess and lament the sins of the day which is now past. Forgive, O Lord, all our negligences, as well as our more manifest offences. Forgive all our evil thoughts, and words, and works. We would

lament every mis-spent hour, and every neglected opportunity of doing good. We lament our want of love to Thee our God, and our want of zeal in Thy service. We lament, also, the great imperfection of our charity towards those around us. Thou hast commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves: but we are continually seeking our own interest; indulging our own ease; and consulting our own humour. Help us, we pray Thee, to follow the example of our blessed Saviour; who pleased not Himself; but went about doing good; and hath commanded us continually to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Him.

We beseech Thee to bless unto us the events of this day. We would remember that all things are directed by Thine unerring wisdom; and that they shall work together for good to them who love Thee. May any trial which we may this day have experienced, teach us more and more to know ourselves:—may every sorrow wean us from this present world: and may every enjoyment be the means of exciting our gratitude to Thee, the author of all good. May the afflictions of others call forth our Christian sympathy; and render us abundant in the exercise of our benevolence.

We pray for Thy blessing on all our friends and relations. Guard them from evil by night and by day: and especially from whatsoever may hurt their souls. Establish them in Thy true faith: and make them fruitful in good works. Bestow Thy special blessing on the rising generation.

May the children of this family live in thy fear, and maintain Thy cause in the world. May they receive

the truths taught them into an honest heart, and be ever followers of that which is good.

[May the servants of this house bear continually in mind that Thine eye is upon them; may they be faithful in all things; and live in peace one with another.]

Bless our Rulers, and country. Give grace to all ministers of Thy Gospel. Have pity on the poor and the afflicted; and make it the daily business of all our lives to minister to the sorrows and wants of others, and to abound in every good work.

We present these our humble and imperfect supplications, in the name of our Lord and Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTEENTH EVENING.

O LORD GOD, our Heavenly Father, we beseech Thee now to deliver us from all wandering thoughts, and to enable us to worship Thee in an acceptable manner, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord

We pray Thee, O GOD, to pardon all the sins of this day. We confess, that we have not served Thee as we ought; but we desire to lament both our negligences and our sins; and we would seriously resolve, that by

Thy grace assisting us, we will endeavour continually to amend our lives, and to walk more conformably to the precepts of Thy holy word.

Pardon whatever pride or vanity we have this day indulged; whatever angry words we have spoken; and whatever sinful thoughts we have harboured in our minds. Forgive our want of sufficient tenderness of conscience in the performance of those duties in which we have been engaged. Pardon, especially, that want of love both to Thee and to our fellow-creatures, which causes us to live so much to ourselves, and to do so little either for the benefit of others, or for Thy glory

We pray Thee, O LORD, to give us hearts more devoted to Thee; and more dead to sin, as well as to all the things of this world. Teach us to know how frail is our life; and how short may be the time of our sojourning here; and how awful may be the account, which we shall have to give of all things done in the body, as soon as we shall be called hence. O let us lie down, night after night, as those who know not whether they may not lie down to rise no more. May we repent daily of our sins;—may we be accepted of Thee through JESUS CHRIST our LORD: and may we resolve, by Thy grace assisting us, to bring forth all those fruits of righteousness which are by Him to the praise and glory of GOD. O save us from a barren and unfruitful faith; by which we do but the more miserably deceive our own souls. Give us that true peace of mind which they alone possess, who love Thy law: and save us from that hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish when GOD taketh away his soul. May we be

iving a life of purity, and holiness, of watchfulness, and self-denial, and of diligence in every good work.

O LORD, take us now under Thy care, both pardoning our sins, and accepting our imperfect services on the past day.

We implore Thy special protection on the children of this family. Save them from the temptations of this vain and evil world. Watch over them during the weakness and inexperience of their youth, and prepare them for the duties to which Thy providence shall call them.

And bless with us all others who are dear to us; and make us to lie down in perfect charity with all men.

We ask every blessing in the name, and through the merits, of the great Mediator and Intercessor, JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SIXTEENTH EVENING.

O Eternal God, Father of men and angels, who hast established the heavens and the earth in a wonderful order, causing day and night to succeed each other: —we make our humble address to Thy divine majesty, begging of Thee mercy and protection, this night and for ever.

O Lord, pardon all our sins, our light and rash words, the vanity and impiety of our thoughts, our unjust and unkind actions, and whatever we have done amiss this day, or at any time before. O God, our souls are troubled through the remembrance of our past transgressions: and we are daily exposed, through the frailty and sinfulness of our natures, to every new temptation, which of ourselves we are not able to resist. We therefore, earnestly beg of Thee to give us a great portion of Thy grace; such as may be sufficient and effectual for the mortification of all our corruptions: that, as we have formerly served sinful desires, so now we may give up ourselves to Thy service, in all the duties of a holy life.

Teach us to walk always as in Thy presence: and put into our souls great love to Thee, that it may become our chief employment to promote Thy glory, and to root out all habits of sin; so that, in faith and purity, we may wait patiently for the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Into Thy hands we now commend ourselves: praying Thee so to bless and sanctify our sleep unto us, that it may be a refreshment unto our wearied bodies;

to enable us the better to serve Thee. And whether we sleep or wake, live or die, may we be Thy servants

We also beseech Thee, O God, to send down Thy blessing on all our dear friends and relations. Bless them in their persons, in their families, and in all their undertakings; and dispose them to advance Thine honour, and to live to Thy glory.

Be Thou a father and a friend to the children of this family. Let Thy providence lead them through the dangers, and temptations, and ignorances of their youth, that they may not run into folly, nor give way to any unbridled appetite. Be pleased so to order the events of their lives, that, by a good education, and by prudent counsel, and, by Thy restraining grace, they may be trained up to serve Thee, in the midst of an evil generation; and, after an useful and holy life may come to a peaceful and happy death; and may be made heirs with Christ in the glories of His heavenly kingdom.

Look down with an eye of favour on the whole Church of Christ. Have compassion on Thine afflicted servants. Give them increase of faith, and patience, and hope; and, in Thy good time, give them deliverance.

And, O Thou who willest not the death of a sinner have pity on the multitudes who walk not in obedience to Thy commandments. Turn them from all their sins, so that their souls may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ. Support also the weak; establish the doubtful and wavering; succour the tempted; and raise up those who are fallen; and teach us all to have com-

passion on the infirmities of our brethren: and to walk charitably one towards another.

Hear, O Lord, these and all our prayers, for the sake of Thine only Son Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SEVENTEENTH EVENING.

Almighty, and ever blessed God, who preservest our lives, and sustainest our health and strength, and multipliest our comforts and enjoyments, we are met together to praise Thee for the mercies which we have experienced, since we were last assembled to worship Thy holy name. Thou art the author of all good:—without Thee, we are utterly weak and helpless, as well as miserable. O Lord, continue to us Thy gracious care: and preserve us, this night, both in body and soul from every evil.

We beseech Thee, especially, to grant unto us all the pardon of sin, and a cheerful confidence in Thy favour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Give us peace through His atoning blood; and being thus reconciled to Thee our God, may we also be in charity with all men. Take from us, O Lord, every angry passion, as well as every tormenting fear of Thy wrath. We be

seech Thee, also, to deliver us from those anxieties and cares which are too apt to distress our minds. Let us trust Thy gracious providence; and ever commit ourselves and all our concerns to Thee, as to a wise and faithful Creator, and a Father and Friend in Christ.

Bless us, we pray Thee, to the end of our lives. Support us in all our future trials,—guide us in all our difficulties—strengthen us for the several duties of our stations—sustain us in sorrow, sickness, and adversity; and, whenever the trials and labours of this mortal life shall have passed, receive us into the haven of everlasting rest.

We beseech Thee to bless our friends and relations. Deliver them from all the dangers and sorrows of this evil world; save them, especially, from sin; unite them with us in the bonds of a common faith; and make us all members of the same blessed family above.

Have compassion on the children of this house; fill them with the knowledge of Thy will; and give them grace to serve Thee, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives.

Have mercy on our President. Direct the councils of this nation. Bless our magistrates. Inspire our clergy with the spirit of true religion. Give to the poor, contentment with their lot;—and to the rich, a spirit of compassion and benevolence. Extend Thy goodness to all mankind. Put an end to war and discord, as well as to vice and superstition; and send Thy Gospel over the earth, to enlighten those who still sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

These prayers we would humbly present, with one

heart and one mind, at the throne of Thy heavenly grace; and we beseech Thee to hear and answer them, according to the riches of Thy mercy in JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

EIGHTEENTH EVENING.

O LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY, who hearest the prayers of all who devoutly call upon Thy name, we kneel down to make our supplications unto Thee, this night; imploring Thee to take us under Thy protection; and to pardon, also, every sin which we may, this day, have committed against Thee.

We, at the same time, beseech Thee to impress upon us the importance of eternal things. May we be deeply persuaded, through the powerful help of Thy Holy Spirit, that we can never prize our salvation too highly; nor strive too earnestly or unceasingly after it. Teach us to remember, that we are dying creatures, who must soon enter into eternity; and must either rise to a state of immortal happiness, or sink into everlasting despair. May we never forget that "one thing is needful;" and may we, comparatively, despise all the things of this

world, while we think of that better part which can never be taken from us.

And pour out upon us, we beseech Thee, the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind. Deliver us from every error by which we may be in danger of being deceived Convince us of the evil which hath been hidden in our hearts; and of the many sins which in our lives we have committed. And do Thou bestow upon us deep repentance for them: and, at the same time, grant us such a lively faith in our Lord JESUS CHRIST, that we may be comforted by the hope of His pardoning mercy; and may be encouraged in pursuing our Christian course.

We would, also, implore Thee, as the God of providence, to suit Thy various dispensations towards us to our several cases and necessities. Send us, we beseech Thee, such circumstances in life, such degrees of health, such friends, and such opportunities of instruction, as may most effectually tend to promote the edification and salvation of our souls. May Thy Holy Spirit dwell within us; and may all things, which befall us, be ordered by Thee for our good. And may we see and adore Thy hand, both in Thy chastisements, and in Thy mercies; and be enabled always to say, "it is the Lord that giveth, and the Lord that taketh away:—blessed be the name of the Lord."

We commit ourselves to Thy mercy and protection, for this night; and we desire to lie down at peace with Thee, and in perfect charity with all men.

And now, O LORD, if we have, this day, mis-spent our time, or have forgotten Thee, or have in any wise

sinned against Thee, we here implore Thy pardon, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

We present these and all our prayers through the merits, and mediation, of the same Blessed Saviour

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

NINETEENTH EVENING.

O LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY, disposer of all events, and Lord over all Thy creatures, who art great in power, infinite in wisdom, and complete in justice, goodness, and mercy; we, Thy creatures, made by Thy hand, and upheld by Thy continual power, kneel down in humble adoration of Thy divine majesty, imploring Thee to have compassion upon us, pardoning our sins, and receiving us into Thy favour, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD.

We desire now to confess the sins of another day; and we pray, that we may do it with humble, broken, and contrite hearts. O LORD, we acknowledge our guilt in every neglect of the duties of the day; in every evil temper which we have indulged; and in every sinful thought and imagination. We lament our forgetfulness that we are Thy creatures, accountable to Thee for all we do; seen by Thine all-piercing eye, wheresoever we are; bound, also, by the strongest obligations

to pay unto Thee constant gratitude and love, to fulfil Thy will, and to do all to Thy glory.

We desire to thank Thee for Thy patience and long forbearance with us. Though we continually offend against Thee, Thou still waitest to be gracious; and though we have been so deaf to the calls of Thy providence, and to the invitations of Thy Gospel, still Thou hast not cast us off: but permittest us, day after day, to read Thy sacred word,—to join in social prayer,—and to call upon the God of our salvation.

We now pray Thee, for Christ's sake, to have mercy upon us; to fill our hearts with a sense of Thy goodness; and to teach us how to serve Thee henceforth in a more acceptable manner; that so we may dwell in the light of Thy countenance, and that Thy blessings may descend upon us. Help us to be faithful in all the duties of life to which Thou hast called us. As masters, may we remember that we have a Master in heaven. As servants, may we serve the Lord Christ. As parents, may we be careful to train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As children, may we be obedient to our parents in all things; proving that this is good and acceptable to the Lord. As citizens, may we obey magistrates, and all who are put in authority over us. And, as members of the same family, may we remember how blessed a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. May we therefore, exercise towards each other all patience, and loving kindness, and charity; and endeavour to preserve the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

O LORD, pardon the sins and negligences of this day; and help us to amend our ways, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

Let us now lie down in Thy fear; and, in the morning, let us again seek Thy favour: and let us ever remember, that Thou, LORD, art with us, by night, and by day; and that Thou alone causest us to dwell in safety.

These prayers we humbly present to Thy divine majesty, trusting in the name of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTIETH EVENING.

ALMIGHTY GOD, Creator of all things, in whose hands are life and death, glory be to Thee for all Thy mercies. We thank Thee for Thy preservation of us during the past day; and for the many bounties of Thy providence. Pardon, O most merciful GOD, all the offences against Thee which we have committed; and also our negligence of those duties which Thou hast required. Have mercy on our souls for JESUS CHRIST'S sake; and vouchsafe unto us the comforts of Thy Holy Spirit.

Enable us, O Lord, to pass our future time on earth, in Thy fear and to Thy glory. Save us from the power of our sins; and from all our spiritual enemies. O Thou, in whose hand are the wills and affections of men, kindle in us, we pray Thee, all holy desires. Repress our sinful and corrupt imaginations. Dispose us to love Thy commandments, and to desire Thy promises: strengthen and establish us in every good work; and grant, that, by Thy constant help and protection, we may so pass through things temporal, as finally not to lose the things eternal.

Grant, that, amidst the hopes, and fears,—the pleasures, and sorrows,—the dangers, and deliverances,—and all the various changes of this mortal life, our hearts may be surely fixed on those joys which are eternal. O merciful Father, do Thou continually direct and bless us. Give us in this world knowledge of Thy truth, and confidence in Thy mercy; and, in the world to come, life everlasting, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

We pray, O Lord, for all our dear friends and relations. Guard them from evil by night and by day Support, comfort, and assist them; and bring them to eternal happiness, through the merits of the same blessed Saviour. Have mercy on the young; may they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and thus learn to do Thy will and to walk in Thy fear, all the days of their lives. We commend unto Thee the President of these United States, and all who are in authority. Bless all the ministers of Thy Gospel. Pity the sorrows of the afflicted; and supply the various wants of all Thy creatures. Be gracious to

our benefactors. We pray Thee, also, to forgive our enemies: and to teach us to exercise kindness and good-will towards all men.

Take us, now, O Lord, under Thy gracious protection; defend us from all the dangers of this night; and prepare us, if it please Thee, by the refreshment of sleep, for the duties which Thy providence shall, on the ensuing day, appoint for us.

Accept, O Lord, these our humble and imperfect supplications, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-FIRST EVENING.

O Lord God, our heavenly Father, who art our daily protector in all dangers, and the giver of every blessing which we enjoy; we desire most humbly and heartily to thank Thee for Thy mercies to this family during the day which is now past; and we pray Thee to preserve us through the night, and to cause Thy peace, at this time, to rest upon us.

Forgive, we beseech Thee, all our sins;—remember not against us the transgressions of this day, or of our former lives; but grant unto us true repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us daily to exercise godly sorrow for all that we do amiss. Put into us a due sense of our great unworthiness, and of our continual guilt; and vouchsafe unto us the light of Thy reconciled countenance; and the comforts of Thy Holy Spirit: that, while we lie down to rest, we may enjoy peace in our consciences, and the hope of pardon for all our sins, through Him who hath died for us.

And teach us, O LORD, to number our days, and to consider our latter end. Let us remember that we are continually drawing nearer to the grave; and that we know not how soon it may please Thee to call us hence. O Thou, by whose mercy we have now been spared another day, help us to redeem the time, and to fulfil the work appointed for us, before we give up our account to Thee. Let us not neglect, nor delay, to execute any good resolution which, by Thy grace, we may have formed.

And, especially, may we none of us put off our repentance; or refuse to hear Thy voice in Thy Gospel; lest death should come upon us unawares. Dispose us, every evening, to try and examine our ways by the standard of Thy holy word. Save us from a hardened heart,—from an unawakened conscience,—and from a worldly and unbelieving spirit. May we remember, that, as Thy mercies are sure to the humble and penitent, so also are Thy judgments sure to him who lives and dies in his iniquity. May we, therefore, daily call upon Thee; and truly humble ourselves before Thee; and may we so worship Thee and serve Thee in this world, that we may be accepted in the world to

come, through the single merits of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Bless, we pray Thee, all our relations and friends Make them partakers of Thy grace, and of all the promises of Thy Gospel. Have mercy on our native land; and continue to us, if it please Thee, the blessings which we have so long and so unthankfully enjoyed: and dispose us to employ them to Thy glory. Direct, we beseech Thee, the President of the United States and all others in authority, that they may, above all things, seek Thy honour; and enlighten us, O GOD, to discharge the Christian duties of the stations in which Thou hast severally placed us.

These and all other things needful for our bodies and our souls,—for our temporal and our eternal interests, we humbly ask in the name of our only Mediator and intercessor JESUS CHRIST.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-SECOND EVENING.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, we beseech Thee to hear the prayers which we are about to offer up unto Thee. Deliver us from all wandering thoughts; and help us to remember that we are now in the presence of that God, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid.

O God, we pray Thee to forgive the sins of the past day. We acknowledge that we have, this day, left undone many things which we ought to have done; and done many things which we ought not to have done. We have trespassed against Thee in thought, word, and deed. And though we have been encouraged by Thy Gospel to repent of our iniquities, and to serve Thee in newness of life, yet we have many times returned to those sins, of which we profess to have repented; and we have fallen under Thy just wrath and displeasure.

But we pray Thee, O Thou God of all grace and goodness, for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, to pardon all that is past; and to take us, this night, into Thy favour, not weighing our merits, but forgiving our offences, and causing us to place our humble trust in Thy mercy. Deliver us, we pray Thee, from the troubles of a guilty conscience, now that we are about to lie down to rest. Save us, O Lord, from the dread of death, and from the terrors of the wrath to come. Grant unto us, if it please Thee, a quiet night; and make us all to be at peace with Thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the same time we beseech Thee, not to suffer that

we should deceive ourselves by any false hope; but give us grace, day by day, to examine ourselves with care and diligence, that we may discover all that is amiss in us. O LORD, deliver us from continuing in any known sin. Save us from every secret iniquity. May we each of us resolve, before we go to rest this night, to forsake, by Thy grace assisting us, every former transgression; and may we now devote ourselves entirely to Thy service.

We further beseech Thee to bless all our relations, friends, and connexions; take both us and them under Thy protection, this night. And have mercy on all those who are in pain, sickness, or any other adversity; do Thou lighten their troubles, and support them by Thy heavenly grace.

And accept our thanks for all Thy goodness vouchsafed unto us this day. Praised be the LORD for all His mercies; for the health and strength, and food and raiment, and comforts of every kind, which we have enjoyed. But, above all, we desire to bless Thy name for the gift of JESUS CHRIST Thy Son; for the instructions of Thy sacred word; and for the hope of everlasting life. O LORD, grant unto us grace to receive these, and all Thy blessings, with a thankful heart: and let us show forth Thy praise, not with our lips only, but with our lives.

Accept, we beseech Thee, our imperfect supplications and prayers, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, our only Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

TWENTY-THIRD EVENING.

O Lord God, our heavenly Father, assist us now to draw near unto Thee with reverence: and grant us the Holy Spirit, that we may worship Thee in an acceptable manner, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Lord God Almighty, we thank Thee for all Thy mercies during the past day: and we are now met together both to praise Thee for Thy goodness, and to commend ourselves to Thy protection. Preserve us from all the dangers of this night; and grant us, if it please Thee, such quiet and refreshing rest, that we may be prepared for all those duties of life which are before us.

We also earnestly beseech Thee to pardon the sins which we may, this day, have committed: and to this end, help us now to confess them before Thee, examining ourselves with all impartiality and seriousness. Pardon every evil temper which we have shown this day, and every rash and angry word which we may have spoken. Pardon also any want of strict integrity in our conduct. Pardon whatever insincerity and hypocrisy Thy holy eyes may have, this day, seen in any of us. Pardon our want of due watchfulness over ourselves, and our too great readiness to cast blame continually on others. Pardon all our disobedience to Thy laws; pardon also our want of submission to Thy providence, and of zeal in Thy service.

For these, and all other sins, which we have any of us, either on this day, or at any other time, committed,

we here unite in imploring mercy, through the name of our most blessed Saviour O LORD, forgive us, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Lay not any of our past sins to our charge; but blot them out from Thy remembrance, for the sake of Him who hath died for us. Give us penitent and contrite hearts, and let us lie down this night in Thy favour.

We also implore Thy blessings on all our friends and relations. Watch over them, we beseech Thee, by Thy good providence; teach them all to live in Thy fear, and to hope in Thy mercy. Bless the land in which we live, and especially the faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Have pity on those who are deprived of the comforts which we enjoy; and are lying down this night in pain, sorrow, and affliction: grant them patience under their sufferings; and make them at length partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom. And teach us, O LORD, to have compassion on the afflicted; and to pray for them: and to do good unto all men; and to live in peace and harmony one with another.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Lord and Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIRST SATURDAY EVENING

O Lord God, our heavenly Father, who preservest us from week to week; and continually renewest Thy various mercies to us;—we kneel down this evening, desiring to express our gratitude and love to Thee, who art the Author of our being and the source of all our happiness.

We thank Thee, that while so many thousands are suffering in misery and want, we are provided with innumerable comforts; and are passing day after day, in quietness and peace.

We pray Thee, O Lord, that, as we look back on our days which are passed, and consider our lot in life, we may become more thankful for all that goodness which is showered down upon us; and more earnest to employ the opportunities and talents which are given to us, in fulfilling Thy will, and in diminishing, as much as in us lies, both the wickedness and the misery which are in the world. We would lament every neglect and abuse of Thy providential gifts,—of which we may have been guilty in times past: confessing with shame and humiliation of soul, that our talents have not been turned to a religious and profitable use, as they ought to have been.

We would now, especially, lament our mis-spent time, and neglected opportunities, and all our other sins, during the past week. How many sinful thoughts have we indulged! How many hasty and unbecoming words have we uttered! And how little has it been in our

minds to exercise every Christian grace! We lament, also, the coldness of our hearts in our religious duties. Though instructed in the affecting truths of the Gospel, and blessed with the knowledge of Christ crucified for us, we confess, that we have been listless and lukewarm in our worship: too much alienated from the life of God; and too much occupied with the cares of this world. Though living, O LORD, on Thy continual bounty, kept by Thy power, and indebted to Thy pardoning grace, how little have we laboured to fulfil Thy holy will, and to walk blamelessly in all Thy statutes and commandments. We now present ourselves before Thee, freely confessing these our sins, and imploring Thy forgiveness in the name of JESUS CHRIST: and we would lie down this night, trusting in His all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross for us; and looking for Thy mercy unto eternal life.

And we pray, that, being thus prepared by repentance and deep humiliation of soul, we may go forth on the ensuing sabbath to hear Thy Gospel, with teachable and submissive minds. May we receive the seed sown into an honest and good heart. May the Gospel of our salvation be the chief desire of our minds, and the consolation of all our hearts. As the sabbath returns, may we welcome the joyful sound; and bless that GOD, who not only increases our temporal mercies, but also sets before us the hope of everlasting life.

And enable each of us, O LORD, who are met here together, to set an example of pure and undefiled religion to all who live around us.

Have compassion on the young in this family **In**

cline them to hear Thy word **with attention**, *that they may grow wiser every day they live; and teach them to lift up their hearts in prayer, while they kneel* **down** *with us to worship Thee.*

Confirm the wavering in the ways of true religion. May they see that godliness has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of the life which is to come. May they, also, be convinced of their sins; and experience what is that peace of conscience, which the Gospel brings to the truly humble and penitent.

To Thee do we now commit ourselves, beseeching Thee to bless every member of this family. May we lie down in the fear of God, in the faith of Christ, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit; and may we rise in the morning, rejoicing in our Christian privileges, and desiring to employ the Sabbath in Thy service.

Hear us, O Lord, in these our supplications, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

SECOND SATURDAY EVENING.

O God, who hast appointed a day in which Thou wilt judge the world in righteousness, give us grace so to try and judge ourselves, that we may not be finally and everlastingly condemned at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Dispose us daily to examine both our hearts and lives; for Thou, O Lord, regardest our secret thoughts. Grant unto us repentance for whatever sins we have committed—either in thought, word, or deed; and forgive all our trespasses, both against Thee and against our neighbour, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

We confess that we too easily forget "the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus." Thou hast sent Thy Son from heaven to save us:—Thou hast invited us by Thy promises, and restrained us by the threatenings of Thy word:—Thou hast set before us "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away:"—and Thou hast warned us of "a worm that never dieth, and of a fire which is not quenched."

We beseech Thee to deliver us from all hardness of heart. May Thy Holy Spirit impress our minds with a deep sense of the importance of eternal things. O may we labour "to make our calling and election sure!" May we be diligent, and hope to the end; knowing that we must soon put off these mortal bodies, and that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is at hand.

We desire to thank Thee for the advantage of Thy holy sabbaths; for the gift of Thy sacred word: and

for all the means of grace. We have abundant light and knowledge;—we have "line upon line, and precept upon precept."

Assist us, this night, to look up to Thee with pure and humble minds. Let us commit ourselves to Thy gracious care: sensible of Thy constant presence with us; and earnestly desiring to partake both of Thy favour here, and of those joys which are at Thy right hand for evermore. And let not the cares and anxieties of life, nor the lawful business in which we have been engaged, prevent our now meditating on a better world.

We pray Thee to bestow Thy blessing on our dear friends and relations; on our country; and on all for whom we are bound to pray. Pity those who are afflicted, and who shall pass this night in wakefulness and pain. Succour the tempted. Give peace to the troubled in mind. Be Thou a Father to the fatherless, and a God of consolation to those who are desolate and oppressed. And give us all grace, that we may abound in charity one towards another; and do good unto all men, according to our Lord's example and commandment.

Pardon the imperfection of these our humble supplications; and grant unto us whatsoever things Thou knowest to be needful for us, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

THIRD SATURDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD, in whose favour is life, and in whose presence there are joys for ever; whom angels and archangels continually adore; and whom all Thy saints in heaven delight to worship; we, who are not worthy to take Thy name into our lips, whose foundation is in the dust, whose very natures are unholy, and whose daily and hourly sins testify against us, desire, nevertheless, to join with all the heavenly host, in blessing and praising and magnifying Thy holy name; imploring, at the same time, that the light of Thy reconciled countenance may shine upon us; and that we may be pardoned and accepted in Thy sight.

O GOD, we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we glorify Thy name, that Thou hast not left us in our low estate; but hast sent salvation to us. We adore Thee for Thine infinite love and mercy, that Thou hast not spared Thine only-begotten Son, but hast freely given Him up for us all; that this Lamb hath been slain, and this atoning sacrifice hath been made for the sins of the world; and that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us.

O LORD, we lament that we have felt during the past week so little love to Thee, who hast done such great things for us. We lament that earthly things have carried away our thoughts; and that sin hath had such dominion over us; and that the Gospel of our salvation

hath had so little power to make us humble and thankful, spiritual and heavenly-minded, patient and meek, and diligent in well-doing.

We now beseech Thee to bless unto us Thy approaching sabbath. May our hearts be warmed with love to Thee. May our prayers and our praises ascend with acceptance to the throne of Thy grace. May heavenly things occupy our thought; and may the world lessen in our esteem.

O God, we lament with shame and sorrow before Thee, that, notwithstanding all the means of grace, we have so little improved our time and talents,—have so little honoured Thee by our lives,—or advanced in true holiness. Day after day, we propose to amend our lives, to repent of all our past sins, and to forsake them henceforth for ever:—but how soon do our hearts again return to the world; and our temptations again come upon us, and overpower us; for our own utmost strength is weakness.

To Thee, the God of all might and mercy, do we, therefore, now pray for grace to serve Thee. Thy face, O Lord, would we seek; on Thee do we humbly wait; beseeching Thee to deliver us from the power and dominion of our sins, and to make Thy strength perfect in our weakness.

Make us, henceforth, to be more fervent in prayer and more conscious of our entire dependence on Thee, and of our infinite obligations to Thee; that, so obtaining from Thee the efficacious help of Thy Holy Spirit, we may be established in Thy most holy ways; and may be carried safely through all the dangers and trials

of this mortal life; till at length we shall sit down with CHRIST in His heavenly kingdom.

We offer up these our imperfect prayers, in the name of that blessed Mediator.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FOURTH SATURDAY EVENING.

ALMIGHTY AND MOST MERCIFUL GOD, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, we beseech Thee to look down on us, Thy servants, who are here assembled to worship Thy holy name.

We thank Thee for Thy daily goodness towards us; for Thou hast made us to abound with the comforts of this life; and hast delivered us out of many dangers to which we have been exposed. Thou hast also blest us with opportunities of religious knowledge; and hast set continually before us the glorious hope of everlasting life. Thou hast guided us by Thy providence; and, after many years of goodness and mercy, hast brought us to the conclusion of another week.

We desire, O LORD, humbly to confess our manifold sins and trespasses against Thee. We have erred and strayed from Thy ways, like lost sheep. We have often wandered from the right path, through our igno

rance and folly; our pride and vanity; our eager, selfish, and covetous desires; our blindness, and prejudice, and hardness of heart. Too often have we called evil, good; and good, evil; and shut our eyes against the truth. O Lord, pardon these and all our transgressions, for Jesus Christ's sake; and make us to be, henceforth, more watchful and circumspect, more faithful and upright, more earnest to know our duty, as well as more diligent to perform it.

Save us from a life of unprofitableness and sloth. Let us remember that Thou wilt require an account of the talents committed to us; and that to whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required. Now, while we have life and a measure of health and strength, let us avail ourselves of those opportunities, which we possess of doing good in this evil world: and let us endeavour to abound more and more in every useful and benevolent work.

We beseech Thee to prepare our minds for Thy service on the approaching sabbath. Deliver us from all eager thoughts concerning the things of this life; and enable us on Thy sacred day to give our undivided attention to the great concerns of eternity. May we rejoice in every return of this holy season; and may we go forth with willing feet to the worship of Thy sanctuary.

We commend to Thy gracious care our several friends and relations. Save them from the dangers of this evil world: sanctify them to Thyself; and prepare them both by the events of Thy merciful providence and by the guidance of Thy good Spirit, for that day

when both we, and they, shall be summoned to appear before Thee.

We pray Thee to have mercy on the poor, the sick, and the afflicted; and to dispose the hearts of many to have compassion upon them.

Bless the President of these United States and all in authority. *Give wisdom to our Houses of Congress.* Inspire our clergy with the spirit of true religion; and unite us all in the bonds of a common faith, one with another.

Put an end to war and discord throughout the world. Do Thou, who art the God of love, dispose the nations to unity and concord; and so order all events, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations.

These and all other blessings we humbly ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

FIFTH SATURDAY EVENING.

O LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY, who art our Creator and Preserver, and our daily Benefactor, assist us now to thank Thee, according to Thy will, for the mercies of the past day; enable us to confess our sins, with devout and contrite hearts; and teach us to pray, with fervent

faith, unto Thee for Thy grace and protection, this night and for ever

We bless Thee, O LORD OUR GOD, that thou hast permitted us to go out and come in, this day, in safety; that Thou hast given us health and strength; hast covered our table with plenty; and has kept us free from trouble, and anxiety, and alarm. But we thank Thee, especially, for that knowledge of Thy Gospel, with which Thou hast blest us. We praise Thee for that glorious and rich inheritance in a life to come, which Thou hast set before us; and for the gracious promise of the pardon of our sins, through JESUS CHRIST.

For these Thy various and great gifts we desire to praise and magnify Thy holy name: and we pray that we may never forget the Author of our blessings; but that day by day, we may abound in thanksgiving; and may, also, freely confess unto Thee all our sins, and may cry unto Thee, in deep penitence, for mercy.

Forgive, O LORD, we now beseech Thee, whatsoever evil Thou hast seen in us this day. We have done many things which we ought not to have done; and we fear that we may at present be aware of only a small part of our offences; for who can tell how oft he offendeth!

O LORD, cleanse Thou us from our secret faults.

Pardon, we pray Thee, all the negligences of this day, as well as the more grievous transgressions. Pardon all our wasted time, our idle words, and our negligence in our several employments. Pardon, also, our evil tempers, our pride, and our envy;—our anger and

violence of spirit. O forgive whatsoever Thou knowest to have been amiss in us,—Thou, O God, who seest our hearts, and piercest into our most secret thoughts.

And, in order that we may obtain forgiveness of the sins both of this day and of our lives past, we now plead that name of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, in which we have been taught by Thy Gospel to place all our confidence and hope. O Father Almighty, pardon us, for His sake. We confess our guilt; we desire to be truly sorry for our sins. Accept, therefore, this our repentance, since we trust not in ourselves, but only in Jesus Christ our Lord and our God. May His death on the cross atone for our offences:—may His intercession with Thee prevail on our behalf. May we be of the number of those, who, renouncing their own righteousness, are saved by His grace. May we believe unfeignedly in His name. May we be justified by this faith: and may we go to rest, night after night, having peace with Thee through Him, our Redeemer.

We pray, also, that we may lie down in charity with all mankind. May we bear no malice nor hatred to any one in our hearts; but may we commit ourselves to rest with thoughts of kindness, and forbearance, and meekness, and good-will to all.

And we pray, also, that while we are commending ourselves to Thy grace and mercy, we may resolve, by Thy help, henceforth to cease from every sin, and to devote ourselves to Thy service. And to this end, may Thy Spirit continually strengthen and assist us. Do Thou, in the ensuing sabbath, put within us good desires, and holy thoughts; and defend us from all

kind of evil; and enable us to worship Thee, acceptably, in the services of Thy house. Help us, day by day, to amend our ways. May we grow in grace, and learn more and more how we may walk so as to please Thee; and thus may we be prepared for the hour of death, and for the day of judgment.

O LORD, take us now into Thy holy keeping. Let Thy blessing be this night upon us, and upon all belonging to us.

We ask this in the name of JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

PRAYERS

ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BY THE LATE HENRY THORNTON, ESQ.

ON THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

O Lord Almighty, Three Persons and One God, Blessed for ever, teach us devoutly to adore Thine awful Majesty. Enlighten our understandings, and sanctify our affections, and strengthen our faith, that we may see Thee, and love Thee, and trust Thee, according to Thy word and will. Thou hast made Thyself known unto us at sundry times and in divers manners, by the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Grant us grace, we beseech Thee, to live in the perpetual sense of Thy Presence, and of our continued obligations to Thee, and of our entire dependence upon Thee. Enable us to retain Thee ever in our knowledge; and give us not over to a reprobate mind: but so reveal Thyself to us, by Thy Blessed Spirit, that, in all our thoughts, and words, and actions, we may glorify Thee our God, and be thankful.

Thankful we ought to be:—O make us thankful for all Thy gifts in Providence and in Grace; since all are Thine: and, above all other blessings, grant us, O God, a grateful heart, ever looking up to Thee in faith and love, and desiring to employ to Thy glory all the talents of the stewardship which Thou hast committed to us.

Long have other lords had dominion over us; and we have served the world, and the flesh, and the Devil. Day by day, we have offended against Thee; and have indulged evil inclinations, and have followed the

ways, and earned the wages, of sin. Grant, that the time past of our lives may suffice for these things; and that, henceforth and for ever, we may flee from them; and may cast down all the idols of our hearts, and may never again bow down to them; but may take up our cross, and follow Thee.

And in order that the knowledge of Thy will may always be diffused in the world, bless, we pray Thee, the Holy Catholic Church, which Thou hast appointed to be a witness and keeper of Thy Holy Word; and, especially, bless that pure and reformed branch established in these realms:—and, that there may never be wanted a fit supply of persons qualified to promote Thy glory in every station of society among us, bless, we beseech Thee, the Universities and all other seminaries of religious learning. Bless, also, all those who are labouring, whether as Bishops or as Missionaries, to extend Thy kingdom in distant or in foreign lands. And grant, that, in Thy good time, and through the single merits of our LORD and SAVIOUR, all who now name His name on earth, and all who shall hereafter believe on Him, may be united in Thy Blessed Presence for ever. O LORD, hasten that time, and prepare us for it.

Enable us now and ever to feel the solemn obligation of prayer. Worms of the earth, we approach the LORD JEHOVAH:—creatures, we approach our Creator·—sinners, we approach our Judge: yet are permitted, and encouraged, to remember, that this Judge, for our sakes, took our nature upon Him; and in our flesh died for us:—and while on earth, taught and commanded His people always, in His own words, to pray and to say,—

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

ON THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

O Lord God Almighty, who hast described Thyself as a jealous God not willing to give Thine honour to another, teach us to worship Thee with a pure and holy service. Enable us always to remember that Thou art a Spirit, and that Thou requirest them, who worship Thee, to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Enable us always to remember that Thou art love: and that Thou requirest the affections of the creatures whom Thou hast made.

Grant to us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, such a measure of Thy grace, that we may never mock Thee by the mere forms of worship, while our hearts are far from Thee: but may we live in prayer, and bear about with us continually an awful sense of Thy presence; and whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, may we do all to Thy glory.

Enlighten us that we may see the evil of our past ways; and strengthen us that we may cast away every idol of this world. May we hate the service of sin; and for ever renounce every evil inclination, which, contrary to Thy command and to our Christian profession, we may hitherto have retained and cherished.

And teach us to thank Thee with our whole hearts for the knowledge of Thy will, and the precepts and promises of Thy Gospel. May we ever remember—when we behold the state of the world around us, and consider our own happier privileges—that of him to whom much is given, shall much be required. Thou hast placed us in the midst of light and knowledge; and hast given to us continual opportunities of serving Thee, according to Thy holy word. If then the light which is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness?

Grant, O Blessed Spirit, that our hearts may be renewed by Thy Grace, so that we may feel our blessings and our duties; and may show forth our gratitude to Thee for our own portion—by diffusing to others also, through our example and our influence, the light and the privileges which Thou hast entrusted to us. Teach us ever to know, that while, in ourselves, we can do nothing, we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us.

Enable us, then, O Lord Jesus, to extend in the world, by our life and conversation, and by all the means committed to us, the knowledge of Thy truth. Bless the labours of those, who, more especially in heathen lands, are endeavouring to enlarge Thy kingdom. Bring home to Thy flock all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy word; and grant that they and we may become one fold, under Thyself the One Shepherd.

These blessings for ourselves, and for all whom we are bound to remember in our prayers, we humbly ask, O Father Almighty, in the name of our only Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

The Grace of our Lord, &c.

ON THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

O Lord Almighty, help us to approach Thee with the deepest reverence; and in prayer, and in praise and in thanksgiving, to feel the solemn obligation of calling upon Thy name. Grant, that we may not mock Thee by taking it in vain by a cold and formal lip-service; but enable us by Thy Grace to pray with

the spirit and to pray with the understanding; that so our sacrifice may be accepted, and our supplications may be hallowed before Thee.

And while we dread, lest we should unworthily, and carelessly, and hypocritically draw near to Thee in prayer, teach us also with watchfulness and anxiety to avoid every approach to levity and profaneness in our daily course of life; and habitually to cultivate truth and purity and sobermindedness in our conversation. Enable us to keep our hearts diligently; and thus to keep our tongues from lying and slandering; from irreverent talking, from foolish jesting, and from blasphemy. And if, in Thy good Providence, the temptations of some of these sins should not assault us so much or so frequently, as they assault other men our fellows, may we labour, more and more, to show forth, in meekness and in charity throughout our whole conduct, the seriousness and holiness which become our Christian profession. Thou requirest us to honour Thee in our hearts and lives; and Thou hast graciously promised, that them, who honour Thee, Thou wilt honour. Enlighten us by Thy Grace, we beseech Thee; and teach us hourly to recollect, that—alike in our thoughts, and in our conduct; in our conversation and in our actions;—we are responsible to Thee: and that not only for the outward deeds of the body, but for the idle words of the lips, Thou wilt call us all to account in the Day of Judgment. Help us, O Lord, in time to repent; and in time to flee from Thy wrath—to Thy mercy: for who can abide Thy coming, or stand before Thy appearing? We desire now to confess with meek contrition our past trangressions; we acknowledge with deep humility our present weakness;—our only hope and our only strength are in Thee.

We beseech Thee always to guide and govern our hearts by Thy BLESSED SPIRIT; and thus to enable us to regulate our tempers, and thus to hallow the workings of our minds, and thus to bridle our tongues, so that in thought and word as well as in deed, we may be gentle and watchful, holy and harmless before Thee,—doing all to Thy Glory, O FATHER ALMIGHTY, in the name of the LORD JESUS;—at the same time, deeply feeling, that without Him we can do nothing; and that, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; and that our refuge and salvation are in Him alone. For His sake, O LORD, and in His words, hear our prayer:

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

ON THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

O LORD ALMIGHTY, who, as on the Sabbath, didst rest from Thy labours, and didst command us to keep one day in seven holy in remembrance thereof for ever, give us grace without doubting to hallow the Lord's Day always before Thee, and to acknowledge the wisdom and the mercy of this Thy commandment.

Teach us to devote the Day, not grudgingly, or of necessity, to Thy service; but cheerfully, and happily; and enable us by Thy Holy Spirit to feel, that, while it is a blessing to our wearied bodies, it is also a privilege to our immortal souls. May we be watchful of the opportunities of instruction which it affords to ourselves, and considerate of the opportunities of rest, also, which it may afford to others.

And may we feel, not only that the day is separate as a day of rest from common uses, but that it is set

apart as a day of prayer and praise, of meditation and contrition, of public, social, and secret devotion—to all Thy Church, in all countries.

Teach us, then, O LORD, to abstain from all conformity to the sinful levity with which the duties and the privileges of the day are often profaned. May it be our delight to serve Thee in Thy House of Prayer, and to withdraw for a season from the world, that so we may be taught and reminded that this world is not our home; that here we have no abiding place; that we are strangers and pilgrims, who have professed to seek an heavenly inheritance,—"a city whose builder and maker is GOD."

O Blessed JESUS, grant us to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. May our supplications and our confessions, our prayers and our praises, unite with those of Thy faithful people in all nations and languages as the Day returns: may the frame of our minds be on that Day always more and more conformed to Thy will; and thus growing into the image of our Lord, and feeling an increasing delight in Thy service, and throwing off the chains of sin, and of Satan, may we rise to the full liberty of the children of GOD; and be fitted, Sabbath after Sabbath, as we advance in age, for the enjoyment of an eternal Sabbath in Thy Presence in Heaven.

And, to this end, grant that we may have, day by day, a reverent sense of Thy Presence on earth: and may feel a growing comfort in the thought, that Thou art always nigh unto us: and thus may every day be Thy day; and our whole souls and bodies be Thine for ever, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c

ON THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

O Lord Almighty, teach us to reverence Thee above all things, as our Father which art in Heaven; and, in obedience to Thy will, to discharge all the duties, which Thou hast required of us, towards the earthly superiors, relations, and friends, with whom Thy Providence hath surrounded us.

Enlighten our understandings that we may see, and sanctify our hearts that we may feel, that our duty is ever our interest; and that, while all Thy commandments are profitable to those who obey them, Thou hast, in Thine infinite mercy, been pleased to give a special honour to this Thy first Commandment with promise; and hast thus directed us to look to the earthly blessings which follow obedience, as well as to the glorious recompense which Thou hast prepared for Thy people in the world to come. But while we freely trust Thee, and fully desire to obey Thee, and look forward with humble confidence to the rewards of obedience, enable us, likewise, to feel, that the will to serve Thee, and the power to serve Thee, as well as the reward of serving Thee, are all alike Thy gifts; and that we can do nothing good without Thee.

We beseech Thee to make us watchful and diligent in the fulfilment of every relative duty:—to our rulers, and to all magistrates; to all our spiritual pastors, and to all our personal and family connexions. Grant that we may always honour and obey all who are placed over us by Thy good Providence; and may pray for them continually. Guard them, O King of Kings, from all dangers, temporal and spiritual; enlighten them, that they may seek, first, their own salvation; and, then, the good of Thy people committed

to them. Give wisdom to our counsellors; and grant them grace to employ their influence to the promotion of Thy glory in the good of Thy Church.

Bless all the bishops and pastors of Thy flock; and give to us the willing ear, and the cheerful heart, that, in teachableness and in obedience, we may maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; serving Thee humbly and holily in that pure and reformed branch of Thy universal Church, of which we are members.

Grant us grace, also, to discharge faithfully and affectionately all our duties in social and domestic life, according to the various relations, to which we may, each of us, have been called; and to fulfil all those duties as in Thy sight,—fearing Thee, and obeying Thee in love.

These and all things needful for our bodies and our souls, for our temporal and our eternal interests, we ask in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

ON THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

O LORD, who hast taught us, that he who hateth his brother without a cause is a murderer; that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; and that love is the fulfilling of the law;—enable us by Thy Grace, to govern our hearts and regulate our tempers according to the perfect rule of charity. May we ever feel, that the indulgence of evil in small things is the most fatal snare of Satan: that an unrestrained look may lead to adultery; and an unrestrained emotion of anger may lead to murder. May Thy Blessed Spirit, then

rescue us from the beginnings of sin; and pour into our minds such love to Thee,—and such love, for Thy sake, to all our fellow-creatures,—that no place may be found in us for those temptations of malice and uncharitableness, from which the last guilty deed of murder may proceed. Make us meek and gentle and kind and forgiving:—in honour preferring one another; not seeking our own; not easily provoked; thinking no evil. O may we follow the spirit of our Blessed Master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; but went about doing good; and who taught us, after His example, to love our enemies; to bless them that persecute us, and to overcome evil with good: and, whenever the pride and selfishness of our own sinful nature shall resent these lessons, and shall rouse us to wrath and malice, subdue, we beseech Thee, O God, by the working of Thy power, that rising of anger, which, if indulged, might make us, in heart, murderers before Thee.

May we ever remember how much we ourselves sin in all we do; and how much, therefore, we have to be forgiven by Thee. If, then, Thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who shall stand? We have much, indeed, to be forgiven by our neighbour, also. O grant us grace meekly to acknowledge these our offences;—our sins before Thee, and our faults towards our fellows; and, while we ask forgiveness for ourselves, cheerfully to forgive others. And may we labour to do good to them, not only working no ill to our neighbours, but seeking their welfare, and continually bearing about with us a spirit of compassion ready to relieve the wants of others; and a spirit of love ready to forgive their wrong-doing, even as we ourselves hope to be forgiven.

And may the awful thought recur to our consciences

that we may—by our example in evil, or by our influence towards evil, or by our neglect of doing the good which our duty towards our neighbour required us to do—have been guilty of endangering his soul. From such a woe, good LORD, deliver us; and lay not to our charge the sins of those, whose souls we may thus have hazarded. Have mercy upon us, O GOD, and blot out from the book of Thy remembrance all our offences, all our ignorances, and all our sins; and may the Grace of Thy HOLY SPIRIT watch over us for good; and teach us, in the brotherhood of CHRIST, to love all Thy creatures for His sake. Amen.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

ON THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who hast taught us, that without holiness no man shall see Thee, and hast commanded us to be holy as Thou art holy, enable us now and for ever to overcome all corrupt affections; and, being renewed and sanctified by Thy Grace, to serve Thee in body, soul, and spirit.

Enable us ever to remember that we carry about an evil heart and a frail and feeble nature; that we are daily compassed with infirmities; and that we have to struggle with temptations from within and from without. Teach us, therefore, to make a covenant with our eyes that they look not on any thing which may lead us to evil:—teach us to make a covenant with our imaginations that they abstain from all approach to a thought of sin:—teach us habitually to feel and fear our own weakness, and to tremble, lest, by yielding to the least indulgence in unlawful things, we

should grieve Thy Blessed Spirit; and lest, finally losing the power of resistance, we should be drawn into everlasting destruction.

O, Blessed Jesus, save us from this awful state. Thou, O God, seest us now: Thou seest us always. Thou knowest, whether we are deceiving ourselves, and mocking Thee; or whether we really and solemnly desire to be saved from the power of Satan; and to be rendered for ever holy and happy beings before Thee. Grant, that we may never speak peace to ourselves, when there is no peace; or indulge the false hope that we have attained the purity which Thou requirest—by abstaining, if we have abstained, from the grosser sins of the flesh. Enlighten us to see, that Thou commandest us to be pure in heart if we hope to see Thee; and convince us, by Thy Holy Spirit, that the pleasures of sin are but for a season;—that, even in this world, those pleasures lead to death; or are fleeting, and unworthy of immortal natures; and that, in the world to come, they will render us for ever the miserable slaves of the Devil.

O Father of purity, enable us to feel, that even a look may be sin; and that sin—unrepented of—is death. Grant us grace, then, to avoid every thought, word, and action, which is displeasing to Thy holy nature; and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Enable us to keep under our bodies, and to bring them into subjection; and to abstain from all appearance of evil; and may our hearts be a fit habitation for Thy Blessed Spirit, this day and for ever.

Blessed Spirit, enter, then, into those hearts; and evermore dwell in them: and guard us, and all Thy people, and all for whom we are bound to pray, from every spiritual and every fleshly wickedness; and

make us Thine now and for ever, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, Amen.

OUR FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

ON THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

O LORD GOD, from whom alone proceed all the good things which we enjoy, who hast determined the bounds of our habitation, and hast allotted to each of us such a share of Thy gifts as Thou seest best for us, grant us, we beseech Thee, the further and greater blessing—to receive our portion at Thy hands, whether it be much or little, not only with contentment, but with gratitude. We are unworthy, O LORD, of the least of all Thy mercies. Enable us to employ them heartily in Thy service; and to do good in our generation with the talents which Thou hast entrusted to us. Grant that we may be ever watchful and ever active; continually alive to the unseen realities of Heaven and Hell; and mortifying all the corrupt affections of earth;—not seeking the wealth of this world as a good;—but receiving it, if, in the course of Thy Providence, it shall be committed to us, reverently as a trust.

Enlighten our understandings, and sanctify our desires, so that we may never seek that which Thou hast forbidden; or injure our neighbour in respect to that which Thou hast bestowed upon him. May we be guarded from that inordinate selfishness, which our fallen nature too often exhibits; and may we do unto all men whatsoever we would that they should do unto us.

And lest we should yield to great sins; enable us, O

God, to avoid the least sins; and to watch against every approach to evil. Grant us grace not only to keep our hands from picking and stealing, but to keep our hearts, also, from every inordinate desire. Pour down upon us, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may never deceive ourselves; or allow ourselves in any false way:—speaking peace to ourselves when there is no peace; and either secretly, or openly, wronging our neighbour by the indulgence of any covetous desire, and the exercise of any selfish and covetous act. Grant us grace to render to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom. And give us tender consciences, O God, that we may not defraud our brother in any matter; but may ever act towards him and towards Thee, as those who are hereafter to give account before Thine awful Throne. Make us ever mindful that the time is coming when the gold and silver of this world will be cankered; and when at last, if not even now, we shall see the folly and the guilt of heaping up ungodly treasure together for the last days. We brought nothing into the world; and we shall carry nothing out of it: and the only question then will be, whether we have been faithful in that stewardship which Thy good Providence may have entrusted to us. Enable us, O Lord, to see that Thy grace only can make us thus faithful: and enable us also always to feel, that, whatever else Thou mayest grant, or withhold, Thou wilt always give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. Pour out, then, upon us, O Father Almighty, this gift of the Holy Ghost, for the sake of our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

The Grace of our Lord, &c.

ON THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

O God, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, and that love is the fulfilling of the Law, pour out into our hearts Thy Blessed Spirit, that we may daily be renewed in the exercise of every Christian grace towards Thee and towards our neighbour. Teach us to love Thee above all things, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

O Thou, who art the God of all truth and holiness, strengthen us that we may flee from every snare of the Devil, who is the father of lies: and enlighten and direct us, that we may always speak truth to our neighbour; and that, while we avoid all malice and deceit towards him, we may likewise avoid all hypocrisy towards Thee.

Shed the Spirit of Wisdom from above into our souls, that we may be pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. And while we are taught by Thy holy Apostle, that the tongue can no man tame, if he trust to his own strength or wisdom; do thou, O God, enable us to bridle it and the whole body. Grant us grace, that we may not think it enough to avoid falsehood when we call upon Thee solemnly to listen to us; but may habitually watch against all those temptations and motions which may lead us in smaller things to violate truth. Keep us from inconsiderateness, and levity, and vanity; which may induce us to injure our fellow-creatures for our own pleasure: guard us from the deeper sins of malice and envy; which may induce us to injure him by deliberate falsehood.

In all our thoughts may we have Thee, O Blessed Jesus, ever before us: and in all our communications

with the world around us, may we desire to act as in Thy presence. While we deal charitably and truly with our neighbour, may we still be strengthened unto holy boldness in Thy sight:—not ashamed of Thee and of Thy word, when the cause of truth shall require us to speak out; but ever ready to maintain right against wrong; and to contend earnestly for the faith; and—in Thy name—when Thou shalt require us—to go forth against all gainsayers. Yet teach us ever, in Thine own Spirit, to prefer, where we may, a lowly and charitable intercourse with all men:—at all times speaking the truth in love: and whenever Thine honour shall require it, speaking that truth, if it be against our neighbour, simply because Thine honour doth require it.

Finally, grant us grace ever to bless Thee with our tongues; and, still more, in our hearts and lives, as well as with our lips, to show forth Thy praise.

Our Father, &c.

The Grace of our Lord, &c.

ON THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret desire can be concealed, grant us, we beseech Thee, such a measure of Thy Blessed Spirit, that we may both discern Thy will, and faithfully perform it.

Thou hast commanded us in Thy word not merely to abstain from grosser sins, from adultery, and from theft; but to avoid every thought and wish of evil, and every covetous inclination. Grant us grace ever to remember that Thou thus requirest purity and self-denial and holiness in the inner man; and not only

the outward service of our lips and members, but the absence of every sinful imagination. Enable us, then, we implore Thee, to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, which may cause us to offend: and teach us to restrain every motion of sin in our souls.

Enable us, in respect to the things of this world, to be contented and thankful; in prosperity, to be meek and humble; in adversity, to be resigned and cheerful: and, in every vicissitude of life, to seek not our own will, but Thy will, O God.

Teach us, day by day, to watch more and more the state of our heart, for out of it are the issues of life. How easily may we deceive our neighbours by our outward conduct and profession! how fatally may we deceive ourselves! but Thou art not deceived: and in all our evil thoughts, in all our covetous desires, in all the imaginations of sin, which we have indulged, Thine eye hath been upon us. May the awful truth be henceforth always present in our souls. Thou, O God, seest us: Thou hast known all the secret transgressions of the heart; and Thou wilt hereafter bring our desires, as well as our works, into judgment, unless they are repented of, and forsaken, and blotted out by the blood of Jesus.

Pardon, O God, for His sake, all in our past lives which hath been displeasing to Thee: strengthen us in the days which may yet be to come; and grant us wisdom and grace to abstain from every thought of evil.

And while we confess our past offences, and feel and deplore our present weakness, and acknowledge that our only help and our only strength are in Thee, teach us to thank Thee with our whole hearts for Thy long-suffering Providence, which still, in the midst of

all our transgressions, hath surrounded us with so many mercies of this life—with the means of grace, and with the hope of glory.

Grant, ALMIGHTY GOD, that we may show forth our sense of Thy goodness by dedicating ourselves anew to Thy service. Enable us to take up our cross, and to follow Thee:—to abstain from every sin, and to flee from every snare; to regulate every desire of our minds; and to let our light so shine forth in our lives, that others—seeing our good works—may, with us, glorify Thee, through whose Grace alone those good works proceed.

We ask every blessing in the name of JESUS CHRIST; and in His words desire to conclude our prayers.

Our FATHER, &c.

The Grace of our LORD, &c.

END OF PRAYERS ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

[FROM THE NEW MANUAL.]

PRAYERS TO BE USED BY ONE OR MORE IN A FAMILY, IN THE PRESENCE OF A SICK PERSON; AND WHICH MAY BE ALSO USED BY A PERSON IN PRIVATE, IN BEHALF OF SICK FRIENDS; AND BE ADDED TO THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS IN THE FAMILY.

[When the Prayers are used by *one person* only, he must use *I* instead of *we; me* instead of *us*. The words *him, he, his,* are printed in italics, that if the sick person be of the other sex, *him* and *his* may be more readily changed for *her, he* for *she*.]

I. O ALMIGHTY GOD, the help of all that put their trust in Thee, the relief of the needy, the sovereign good of all mankind; hear the prayers *we* now offer unto Thy Divine Majesty in behalf of Thy servant, now lying upon the bed of sickness. Look upon *him*, we pray Thee, with Thy tenderest pity and compassion, and be Thou gracious and favorable unto *him*, according to the necessity of *his* case, and to the multitude of Thy tender mercies in CHRIST JESUS.

In submission to Thy most wise disposal of things, *we* beseech Thee to abate *his* distemper, to ease *his* pains, and restore *him*, in Thy due time, to *his* former health and strength, that *he* may have a longer time to work out *his* salvation, and be more useful in *his* station, and do more good in *his* generation: but however Thou shalt be pleased to deal with *him* as to the concern of *his* body, yet, O LORD, let *his* soul be ever precious in Thy sight; wash and cleanse it, *we* beseech Thee, in the blood of Thy dear SON, that it may be delivered from all the defilements it hath contracted in this sinful life, and be presented pure and spotless before the throne of grace.

O! give *him* a right discerning of the things which

belong to *his* peace, and let them never be hid from *his* eyes.

Enable *him* to finish the great work *he* has to do; give *him* a true and unfeigned repentance of all *his* sins; and a firm reliance on Thy gracious promises; and grant that *he* may find that peace of God which passes all understanding.

Fit *him*, O LORD, for living and dying, and for whatever, in Thy wise and righteous providence, Thou hast designed for *him*. And if Thou hast determined that this sickness shall be a sickness unto death, and this visitation *his* last visitation, prepare *him*, O merciful GOD, by Thy grace, for Thy blessed self, and grant *him* a safe and comfortable passage out of this world to that which is infinitely better, through the merits and mediation of Thy blessed SON, our only Saviour JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

O GOD, the Father of heaven,
Have mercy upon *him*,
Keep and defend *him*.

O GOD the SON, Redeemer of the world,
Save *him* and deliver *him*,
Have mercy upon *him*.

O GOD the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the FATHER and the SON,
Have mercy upon *him*,
Strengthen and comfort *him*.

O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity,
Have mercy upon *him*.

Remember not, LORD, *his* offences, nor call to mind the offences of *his* forefathers; but spare *him*, good LORD, spare this Thy servant, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood, and be not angry with *him* for ever.

Spare *him*, good LORD.

From Thy wrath and heavy indignation; from the fear of death; from the guilt and burden of *his* sins; and from the dreadful sentence of the last judgment,

Good Lord, deliver *him*.

From the sting and terrors of conscience; from distrust or despair; from anguish or agony, that may any way withdraw *his* mind from Thee,

Good Lord, deliver *him*.

From the bitter pains of eternal death; from the powers of darkness; and from the illusions and assaults of our spiritual enemy,

Good Lord, deliver *him*.

By Thy manifold and great mercies; by the manifold and great mercies of Jesus Christ Thy Son; by His agony and bloody sweat; by His strong and crying tears; by His bitter cross and passion; by His glorious resurrection and ascension; by His effectual and most acceptable intercession, and by the graces and comforts of Thy Holy Spirit,

Good Lord, deliver *him*.

In the time of extremity; in *his* last and greatest need; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,

Good Lord, deliver *him*.

We sinners do beseech Thee to hear *us*, O Lord God; that it may please Thee to assauge *his* pains, and give *him* patience to bear *his* sickness; and when Thou shalt call *him* hence, give *him* a quiet and joyful departure:

We beseech Thee to hear *us*, good Lord.

That it may please Thee to make *him* partaker of all Thy mercies and promises in Christ Jesus:

We beseech Thee to hear *us*, good Lord,

That it may please Thee, after this life, to bestow

upon *him* the state of joy, bliss and happiness, with all Thy blessed saints in Thy heavenly kingdom:

We beseech Thee to hear *us*, good LORD.

SON of GOD, *we* beseech Thee to hear *us*.

O LAMB of GOD, that takest away the sins of the world,

Grant *him* Thy peace.

O LAMB of GOD, that takest away the sins of the world,

Hear *our* prayers, and have mercy upon *him*

[This is to be used when there appears little hope of recovery.]

II. O LORD, raise up Thy power and come among us, and with great might succor Thy poor servant now languishing under great weakness of body; look with an eye of mercy upon *him*, who in appearance is now drawing near the time of *his* dissolution; perfect, O GOD, *his* repentance, and make it effectual through the blood of the ever-blessed JESUS; and for CHRIST'S sake, pardon all the errors of *his* past life, that *he* may come to *his* great change without guilt, and feel its near approach without fear and terror. O give *him* a firm and well-grounded assurance that thou art fully reconciled unto *him;* and now *he* is entering into the valley of the shadow of death, take care of *him*, and carry *him* through that dark passage into the bright regions of eternal bliss: but whether Thou seest it fit to give *him* such a foretaste of happiness, yet, O merciful GOD, take *him* not out of this world before *he* is fitted and prepared; that when *he* goes to meet the Bridegroom, *he* may not find the door to everlasting happiness shut against *him*.

O LORD, with Thee nothing is impossible; if Thou wilt, Thou canst even yet raise *him* up, and grant *him* a longer continuance among us; but nevertheless, no

our will but Thine be done; *we* desire to leave *him* in Thy hand, and commend *him* to Thy mercies, and to the love and compassion of the blessed JESUS. O LORD, hear *his* prayers, and the prayers of all *his* friends for *him;* support *him* in *his* dying agonies; strengthen *him* under all *his* weaknesses; visit *him* with the strong consolations of Thy Holy Spirit, and receive *him* into the blessed society of saints and angels; there to love, praise and adore Thee for ever, through the merits of Thy beloved Son JESUS CHRIST the righteous. *Amen.*

EJACULATIONS FOR SICK AND DYING PERSONS.

O blessed LORD, who scourgest every son whom Thou receivest, let me not be weary of Thy correction.

Give me such a perfect submission to Thee, the Father of Spirits, that this chastisement may be for my profit, and that I may thereby be made a partaker of Thy holiness.

I confess, O LORD, that I have deserved much greater punishments than I now feel.

O make me cheerfully and thankfully to bear my present pains; chasten me as Thou seest fitting; do with me what Thou pleasest here, so I may not be condemned in the world hereafter.

O CHRIST, who first sufferedst many and grievous things, and then enteredst into Thy glory, make me to suffer with Thee, that I may also be glorified with Thee.

O LORD God most holy, O LORD most mighty, O holy and most merciful SAVIOUR, deliver me not, I beseech Thee, into the bitter pains of eternal death.

O cast not off the bowels of Thy tenderest compas-

sions, but, even as a father that pitieth his own children, be Thou so merciful unto me, Thy sinful but repenting servant.

O blessed High Priest, who art able to save to the utmost them who come unto God by Thee; save me, I beseech Thee, who have no hopes but in Thy merits and intercession.

Suffer not, O my Redeemer, my soul, which Thou hast purchased with the invaluable price of Thy own blood, to perish; but say unto me, I am thy salvation.

O dear Jesus, who humbledst Thyself even to the death of the cross for me, let that precious death of Thine sweeten all the bitterness of mine.

I believe that Thou shalt come to be my Judge.

I pray Thee, therefore, help Thy servant, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood.

Make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.

O receive me into that place of rest, where all tears shall be wiped from my eyes; where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain.

O take me where I shall for ever behold Thy face, and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth.

O Lord, in Thee is my trust; O cast not out my soul.

O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

A PRAYER FOR TRUST IN GOD IN SICKNESS.

O Almighty God, our only help in time of trouble, look with pity and compassion upon me, now under Thy afflicting hand. Be Thou my stay and confidence under all my sorrows and afflictions, and suffer me not to sink under the weight of them, through any dejections or faintness of spirit.

Give me such an entire trust and confidence in Thy mercy, through the merits of my dear Redeemer, that I may cast all my care upon Thee, and with cheerfulness commit myself into Thy hands, assuredly believing that all things shall work together for good to them that love Thee; and, O Lord, grant that I may be found such an one as, through Thy great mercy, may be entitled to the benefit of Thy gracious promises. Make me willing and ready to yield to Thy wisdom, and to prefer Thy will before my own; to be contented to bear what Thou pleasest, and to be eased of my burden in Thy time, which is always best. But, O Lord, however Thou art pleased to deal with my body, yet spare my soul, I beseech Thee, and deliver it from the bitter pains of eternal death. O take me not out of this world till Thou art reconciled unto me, and hast fitted me in some measure for Thy heavenly kingdom. Grant, O Lord, that whether I live, I may live unto Thee, or whether I die, I may die unto Thee; so that, living and dying, I may be Thine, through Jesus Christ, my ever-blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

FAMILY COMMENTARY

UPON THE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

PREFACE.

In the Preface to a volume of "Family Prayers," by the late Mr. Henry Thornton, which was printed last year, (1834,) it was stated, in substance, that portions of a "Family Commentary," by the same wise and good man, which, though never, indeed, intended for publication, were yet complete and fit for it, might, at no distant period, be expected to issue from the press. The present Commentary, upon the Sermon on the Mount, is one of those portions. The favourable reception of the "Family Prayers" deepens the Editor's regret, that, when, at length, after the lapse of many years from the Author's death, the publication had been undertaken, any cause should have occurred to deprive the world, even for a day, of the benefit of the present Work.

Those who have become familiar with the "Prayers," will recognise in this Volume the work of the same piety; and will require no other notice of the Author, than that they already owe to him—the manual, abovementioned, of domestic worship. Without presuming to anticipate the judgment of others, the Editor, in committing this work to the blessing of God, and looking to that blessing, only, for

its success, cannot withhold the expression of his own opinion, as more than justifying him in the publication, that, so far as he knows the works of the best divines, no other Commentator, on the same portion of Scripture, has combined, in an equal degree, a deep knowledge of the human heart, with an extensive experience of human life; vigorous common sense, with high and holy wisdom; Christian love, with Christian faithfulness. He has no hesitation in adding his belief, that, so far as can be said of any human being, the Author lived in the spirit of his Commentary.

R. H. I.

September 15, 1835.

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FAMILY COMMENTARY

ON THE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

I.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 1—3.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Towards the end of the last chapter, we read that our Saviour, while He healed the bodily diseases of the people, preached to them the gospel of the kingdom. From this and the following chapters we may learn the manner in which He preached it.

In the beginning of His Sermon on the Mount, He delivers many short but important sayings, sayings characteristic of His Gospel, sayings calculated to strike through their novelty, and their contrariety to the common maxims of his hearers. "And He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This would be a complete contradiction to the prevailing opinions of his hearers. It is the common sentiment that they are the most blest, who think the most favourably of themselves, and are the most fully persuaded that they are highly thought of by others

Self-complacency is the great source of human felicity The mind of the man of this world dwells with pleasure on the thoughts of his own talents, of his own exertions, of his own attainments, his own wealth, his own influence. He also delights himself with the idea of his own moral excellence. He easily persuades himself, and he rejoices in the persuasion, that his dealings are just; his integrity, strict; his feelings, kind; his charity, large; his conduct, irreproachable; and his heart, excellent. His very religion also becomes a source of self-complacency. He pleases himself with thinking how regular are his prayers; and how punctual his attendance on divine service: how complete, in short, is the performance of his duty both to GOD and to man. Thus he is rich in his own eyes, in reference both to his natural endowments, his moral qualities, and even his religious observances.

The religion of CHRIST stands directly opposed to the turn of mind which has been described. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Man has no title to that complacency which is so natural to him. Has he endowments of body and mind? These were bountifully given to him by GOD: and GOD, therefore, should have all the glory. Does he reply, "I have improved my natural talents by my own diligence."—"But on what motive have you been thus diligent? Your very diligence has been your sin, if it have proceeded from an ambitious, worldly, covetous, or selfish principle. Let it, however, be admitted, that your diligence has arisen from the right motive, namely, that of pure love to GOD and to your fellow-creatures:—let it be admitted, that you have been a true Christian: yet, even in this case, your goodness has been imperfect;—you have done less than you ought to have done, after all, you are 'an unprofitable servant.' And moreover the little, which you have done aright, has been performed through the help of GOD's free grace working in you, so that there is no ground for self-complacency." The truth is, that man is a poor, dependent, weak, and sinful crea

ture; and that he stands indebted to the divine goodness and mercy for every thing which he either has or hopes for. He cannot prove the justice of that praise which he assumes; and the knowledge of this his weak and fallen state, is a fundamental point in religion. A man must be emptied of himself, in order that he may be filled with the blessings of the Gospel. He must become poor in spirit, in order that he may become rich in faith and a partaker of the kingdom of heaven. Blessed therefore is the man who thinks meanly of himself, and highly of his Maker and Redeemer. Blessed is the man who walks humbly with his GOD, and is also humble towards his fellow-creatures. Blessed is the man who both feels and manifests this poverty of spirit. This temper may not exalt him in the eye of the world; but it is the temper befitting his condition—it is a temper honourable to GOD, and truly beneficial to his fellow-creatures. It is the temper which CHRIST has pronounced to be characteristic of the Christian.

II.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 4.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"BLESSED," says the world, "are the joyful and the gay. Blessed are the rich, the prosperous, and the healthy. Blessed are they who cast away care; who laugh, and drink, and sing; who are vexed by no earthly calamities, on the one hand; and by no qualms of conscience, on the other; who dread no devil; who fear no hell; who feel no awful forebodings of a judgment to come; but having

passed merrily through life, slip easily out of it, without much horror in their minds, and without even a dying groan." Such are the world's happy men; such is their blessedness. How many songs have been written in praise of the life which we have described, and have been sung with a chorus of joy by many a large company! But blessed, says our SAVIOUR, are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Our SAVIOUR thus warns us against the common joy of the world; for it is a joy which shall terminate in sorrow: whereas this is a sorrow which shall as assuredly end in joy. "Blessed are they that mourn." This may be interpreted, first, as referring to the afflictions which many pious men endure; while the gay and the thoughtless seem to be free from them. "They come into no trouble," said the Psalmist, "like other folk; neither are they plagued like other men: their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish:" while he says of himself, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

Many parts of Scripture speak of the afflictions of the righteous; as for instance—"Whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth:" and again, "Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." The truth is, that affliction and trouble are the means by which GOD very frequently brings the sinner to himself: while worldly happiness and prosperity are often the portion of those who possess the most hardened hearts. How many Christians can bear witness to the truth of this saying of CHRIST. They were once as gay and unconcerned, as their most thoughtless friends are now. They joined in the midnight feast and revelry; and they praised the god of laughter and the god of wine. But while proceeding in this course, they were overtaken by some calamity, by sickness, poverty, or some bitter disappointment; and the affliction, which seemed at first to be the deathblow to their hopes, subdued in them

the love of this world; and became the beginning of a new life of faith and hope and joy and satisfaction in GOD. They exchanged, therefore, a turbulent and heedless joy, which would have soon ended in sorrow, for a sorrow which has led to permanent and real joy.

But secondly, the mourning spoken of in this passage may be understood as referring to that sorrow, on account of sin, which the Christian has felt, especially on his first repentance; and which he continues to feel, in the daily exercise of the same grace. The sorrow of which we before spoke *often* ends in joy; this *always* does: for this is that godly sorrow mentioned by St. Paul, which "worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Repentance is the foundation of all true comfort in religion. And repentance is accompanied with many a distressing thought, perhaps by many a tear, certainly by many a sorrowful remembrance of past negligences and sins; but such sorrow is soon turned into joy; therefore "blessed are they who thus mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Let us not, then, complain of religion as gloomy; though we should see some pious persons severely afflicted and often much cast down. They are cast down perhaps only for a time. They may be suffering under a deep sense of their own unworthiness, and as yet but imperfectly acquainted with the grace of their Redeemer. A Mary weeping at the feet of Jesus, and even a Lazarus lying at the gate full of sores, are happier than a Dives clothed with purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. One in his lifetime receives his good things; and the other, his evil things; but soon the one shall be comforted; and the other, tormented. "Blessed" then (as our Saviour is represented to say in another gospel) "are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. But woe unto you who are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you who laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep."* The

* St. Luke, vi. 21, 25.

laughter of the ungodly is as the crackling of thorns which is soon over; but the affliction of the righteous, though for the present it be not joyous but grievous, afterwards bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness

III.

ST. MATTHEW, V 5

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Our Saviour here delivers another important truth, and he borrows his language from the 37th Psalm. The Psalmist, after speaking of the wicked, who seem for a while to prosper in the world, exhorts the righteous not to fret on that account; for "evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth;" and he adds in another verse, "But the *meek* shall inherit the earth." We may discover, partly from these words, and partly from other passages in the same Psalm, what was the precise meaning of our Saviour. By the meek, those persons are intended, who, laying aside that ambition which is common in the world, resort to no violent or unjust means of advancing their fortune; but commit themselves quietly and patiently to God, wait His time, trust His providence, are content to let others gain an advantage over them, and even bear the injustice of a neighbour, a rival, and an enemy, without being ruffled by it. *The meek*, says David, *shall inherit the earth*. The promises of the Old Testament were generally temporal; life and immortality having been brought *clearly* to light, only by the Gospel. Nevertheless under the veil of these temporal promises, spiritual blessings were shadowed forth. The term used in the Old Testament, "shall inherit the earth," might,

therefore, under the New Testament dispensation, be properly rendered "shall be blessed." We may, then, deduce from this saying of CHRIST, that to the meek were the promises made under the Old Testament, by modes of expression suited to that dispensation; and that to the meek also, were the promises made under the New; the Old and the New Testament being in this respect perfectly agreed.

Perhaps it would not be difficult to show that the promise of a blessing to the meek is often fulfilled even in this life, under our dispensation; for though the turbulent frequently seize the possession of the earth, the meek more truly enjoy it. To occupy peaceably a small estate, is better than to gain by violence a large domain; of which the right is disputed; and the possession, continually interrupted. It is more truly to "inherit the earth."

Let us then value the advantages of meekness, above all the precarious power and riches which may be acquired by turbulence of spirit. Let us also remember that we are specially called by CHRIST to the exercise of this grace. Christians must be the quiet persons of the land; they must not be forward, and assuming, and ambitious;—eager, factious, and dissatisfied. They must be content with such things as they have: they must not envy the prosperous:—they must, in their very religion, avoid noise and disputation, "for the servant of the Lord must not strive, but must be gentle unto all men:—*in meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves." That violence, which is so common among other men, should have no place among believers In women, particularly, meekness is a most becoming grace. Their chief ornament should, as the Apostle says, be that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price." But it is a virtue which is excellent in all, and is required of all. To be meek, is to follow CHRIST; it is to follow both His precepts and His example.

Come, take my yoke upon you," said our SAVIOUR, "and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

IV.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 6.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

THE word "righteousness," when it occurs in the Old Testament, commonly stands for the whole of religion. It there includes duty to GOD as well as to man,—faith as well as practice: and the word is here to be understood in a no less general sense; for CHRIST, who was by birth a Jew, and who for the most part spoke to Jews, addressed them in those expressions which were common in the Old Testament; usually intending, however, to give His words that more exalted meaning which was required by the spirituality of the new dispensation.

The term "righteousness," when here used by CHRIST, may, therefore, be understood to imply every thing which characterizes His religion. As the expression, when used by David, stood for the whole of the religion of the Old Testament; so here in the mouth of CHRIST, it stands for the whole Gospel: for things to be done, as well as truths to be believed; for doctrine, and for practice; for duties, and for privileges also. "Blessed, then, are they who, thus, hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Now the generality of mankind hunger and thirst after far other things. Wealth is the chief good of some. If they were asked what is the great object at which they aim, they would admit that it is to make their fortunes; and perhaps would be surprised to hear an insinuation, that there could be any harm in allowing this to be the chief desire of the heart. Others desire not wealth so much as the things which wealth can purchase. They wish for ease and enjoyment; and, because they seek these in no very scandalous or forbidden way, they are unconscious of

their falling short of the Christian character. Others desire honour:—they wish above all things to be in repute among their neighbours. Credit at home, or honour abroad, are the things which they hunger and thirst after; and these, especially if they pursue reputation by means which are not ordinarily deemed dishonourable, are no less confident of the sufficiency of their virtue. Thus, all seek some worldly good; and all imagine, that they shall be supremely blest, if they can but attain their object.

But "blessed," says our SAVIOUR: (who here again is opposing the common maxims of mankind) "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after *righteousness*."—"Blessed is the man who no longer hungers and thirsts after the things of this life, of which the attainment is uncertain, and which will be found unsatisfying, if they should be attained: but blessed is he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness;—that is, blessed is he who longs, like one who is hungry and athirst, to obtain possession of every thing which is included in my Gospel. Blessed is he who desires pardon of his iniquities, and peace with GOD, a share in the atonement which I am to offer up for man; and the aid of all the influences of my Spirit. Blessed is he who longs to have the victory over his sins, and to have all holy affections excited in him. Blessed is he who wishes to have his understanding enlightened, that he may know all the doctrines of my religion; to have his conscience made tender and afraid of sinning; and to have his heart purified by faith. Blessed is he who accounts his chief joy to be joy in GOD; and his chief consolations, the consolations of my Spirit. Blessed is the man whose hungering and thirsting is of this description; *for he shall be filled:* he shall obtain the things which he desires; his very longing for them is a pledge that he shall possess them. Worldly things disappoint him who pursues them: but it is the maxim of my kingdom, that he who has the true desire after righteousness,—he who hungers and thirsts, not after a part only, but after the whole of my Gospel, shall assuredly be filled; and such is

the gracious and encouraging promise which I now promulgate to my disciples; he shall possess all the privileges of the children of GOD; he shall be a member of my kingdom here; and, in the world to come, he shall have life everlasting."

Such is plainly the meaning of this saying of CHRIST Let us then be fearful of fixing our hearts on earthly things; and let us remember that the promise extends to all generations: "BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED."

V.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 7.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

No temper of mind has been more absolutely required by Christianity than a disposition to show mercy; and the reason is plain. The Gospel teaches that man is himself an offender against his Creator; and that he owes to the grace of GOD all his own hope of salvation. If, then, we expect to have the benefit of the Divine Mercy, we ought to be ever ready to show mercy to our fellow-creatures. CHRIST, in many modes, and on various occasions, urged this duty on his disciples. At one time, He related to them the story (or parable) of a servant, who, having had the great sum of ten thousand talents freely forgiven, cast his fellow-servant into prison, on account of a debt of only one hundred pence. "Oh thou wicked servant," said his Lord, 'I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? and his lord was wroth; and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should

pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Our SAVIOUR, even in that short summary of a prayer, which He taught to his disciples, has inserted an expression which forcibly inculcates the necessity of this forgiving spirit. He instructs us to say, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And it is observable, that, after He had delivered the prayer, He addressed these words to his disciples, "for if ye forgive men their tres passes, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

This expression remarkably accords with those words in the Sermon on the Mount which we are now considering. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;" and it might have been added, woe be to the *unmerciful*, for they shall *not* obtain mercy: or, as the Old Testament expresses it, "he shall have judgment without mercy who hath showed no mercy."

This saying of CHRIST, like many others which preceded it, would undoubtedly seem new to the multitude; for the world was then much less inclined to mercy, than it is at present. On the one hand, the Jews, though taught by their Prophets to show mercy, were become false interpreters of their own Scriptures. They admitted, indeed, that they were taught to love their neighbour; but they deduced from this very precept a right to hate their enemy. On the other hand, the heathen had no idea of the duty of forgiving injuries.

Now, indeed, we all agree, that it is a Christian duty to show mercy. CHRIST has said this so plainly, that it is not possible to deny it. But has the spirit, which is here condemned by CHRIST, been expelled out of the Christian world? Far from it. If this were the case, if this one Christian temper were fully attained, we might fairly hope

* St. Matt. vi. 14, 15.

that other graces might be possessed in like perfection; for one Christian disposition fails not to accompany another; and thus, according to the expression of this passage, since all were become truly merciful, so all might obtain mercy.

It is much to be suspected, that many, who freely admit the excellency of this saying of CHRIST, contrive to evade it. They, for instance, who say that they freely forgive an injury but cannot forget it, break this admonition of CHRIST. They also, who *profess* both to forget and to forgive, may manifest by some part of their conduct that they are transgressors on this point. And even they who confer some favour on the person who has injured them, may not be clear of the sin in question; since the very pride of superiority may lead a man to confer a favour on him from whom an injury has been experienced. To receive a favour from an enemy is a better proof of a forgiving spirit than to bestow it.

The chief point for examination is the temper of mind in which we live towards those whom we account our enemies. Do we, then, rejoice to show mercy to others, heartily and freely, and in the same manner in which GOD shows mercy to us, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not? Are we the first to seek to be reconciled when we have had a quarrel against any, or do we expect the other party to make previous submission? Are our reconciliations, also, sincere and complete? Is there no root of bitterness left within us, even after a seeming agreement has taken place? Do we feel alienated from no one? would our very heart, if it could be seen, exhibit compassion, and tenderness, and benevolence, and lovingkindness to all, not excepting him whom we have accounted to be wanting in proper kindness, and beneficence towards us?

Do we live, in short, under the powerful influence of that great principle of the Gospel,—that we ourselves have sinned against GOD, ten thousand times more than any fellow creature has ever trespassed against us; and that, as we

hope nevertheless to find mercy, so we must also show mercy, and show it not only by some special acts, but by our whole character and conduct among our fellow-sinners?

VI.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 8.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

PURITY of heart is another principal point in the character of the religion of CHRIST. In this respect, Christianity differs from the common systems of the world. Men of the world make morality to consist in the external act, and pay little regard to the motive. They are, also, partial in their morality. Men, for instance, who are occupied in the administration of government, are apt to consider obedience to the laws to be the great test of morality. Only the outward act, indeed, is cognizable by them. They do not concern themselves about purity of heart. Masters, in like manner, are inclined to judge of the character of their servants by what those servants are to *them*. If the external conduct of the servant be proper, the master is satisfied. He adverts not to the secret sins which the servant may commit; nor does he know whether the servant's motive to obedience to him be religious, or not. Many a servant, therefore, is called a good servant, who in the sight of GOD is a wicked man; "for GOD judgeth the heart." Traders estimate the character of their fellow-traders by the honesty of their dealings: and all men, indeed, are agreed in esteeming honesty very highly, because they have an obvious interest in maintaining it. The poor judge of the moral character of the rich, by the liberality of their character; and do not inquire whether the beneficence spring from ostentation, or from any other evil principle in the

heart. They do not consider whether an act of bounty to themselves may not be cruelty to others. Even ministers of the Gospel, (through the weakness natural to man,) sometimes perhaps too easily assume that person to be good who attends their ministry, who swells their congregation, and is moral in respect to the outward actions of his life. since ministers see not the heart.

It is, therefore, an easy thing to acquire a good character in the world. In general, you have only to act towards any person in the manner which shall gratify his feelings, agree with his convenience, and promote his interest; and you shall be pronounced by him to be a worthy man. Such is the world's morality. He is moral who serves and pleases us; and he is immoral who contradicts or injures us; we assume his heart to be good if the man have been good to us.

This false mode of judging others tends to false judgment of ourselves; because too many attend more to the character which they have with men, than to what they are in the sight of GOD. It is exceedingly difficult to call men away from the consideration of what others think of them: to make them meditate on their own way, scrutinize their motives, and examine whether amidst all the accomplishments which they receive, they are sincere in the sight of their Omniscient Judge.

"Blessed," says our SAVIOUR, "are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD." Purity of heart, indeed, leads to the fulfilment of every part of morality; and not of morality alone, but of religion also. To this purity it is the great end of Christianity to bring us. The Pharisees did all to be seen of men. Their very alms became a sin; because they were not done from a right motive. Their religion also consisted in forms and ceremonies in which the heart had no part. The religion of CHRIST stands opposed to all systems of partiality and hypocrisy. All the doctrines of Christianity have, therefore, a manifest tendency to promote this purity. A principle of purity is connected with its faith, its hope, and its charity. Of its *faith*, it is observed

in Scripture, that GOD "purified men's hearts by faith." Every one that hath this *hope*, is said to purify himself as GOD is pure: and the great Christian grace of *love*, or *charity*, is thus spoken of by the Apostle;—"Now the end of the commandments is charity, out of a *pure* heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see GOD." The words imply, that they, and they only, shall see Him; for "without holiness, no man shall see the LORD." GOD is pure; and they who hope to enter into His presence must be pure also. Heaven is a place into which nothing shall enter that defileth. Spotless purity, indeed, is not to be attained here; but it is to be cultivated on earth, in order that it may be perfected in heaven. It is, indeed, for this purpose, that the HOLY SPIRIT is bestowed. To purify our hearts is the great end of His coming. Let us then pray for His divine influence upon us. The death of CHRIST,—the great atonement for sin,—is spoken of in Scripture as tending also to our purification; for "He gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

VII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 9.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

OUR SAVIOUR here names another of those dispositions by which a Christian was to be known: and pronounces the possessor of it to be blessed. The introduction of a more peaceable spirit into this violent and contentious world was one of the great ends to be brought about by the

Gospel: and the Apostle, in exact agreement with his Master, speaks thus to all Christians: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Here, however, it will perhaps be objected:—"But has not Christianity been the cause of many wars, as well as of heats and animosities among the several sects who profess it? Do not individuals often quarrel on the very subject of religion? Does not Christianity, therefore, hinder peace, instead of promoting it; and are not many Christians very far from peaceable?" Two answers must be given to this objection. First, it must be admitted, that Christianity (and we mean real Christianity) has been the *innocent* cause of many differences. It has necessarily created a new diversity of opinion. Imagine to yourself a family in which all the members agree to forget God; and to live wickedly, without upbraiding or reproving one another. And, then, imagine a part of this wicked family (and at first only a small part) to become sensible of their former wickedness, and to begin to lead a new life, and to wish to bring the rest of the family to the same sentiments. Do you not see, that, in such a case, a contention will arise which there was not before; the good, by their conduct, and sometimes also by their speech, reproving the wicked; and the wicked becoming exasperated at the reproof? And to whose fault ought this new contention to be charged? The wicked, no doubt, will be inclined to say, that it is the fault of those who have introduced the new opinions; and who assume themselves to be so much better than their neighbours, but is it not much fairer, to affirm that the wicked are in fault, who are determined to retain their wickedness; especially if the good should be peaceable in their behaviour, and if this peaceableness of temper should have made a striking part of their very change?

Such is the fair explanation of the manner in which Christianity has been the occasion of new differences. In *this* respect, we grant that it has broken the peace of the world

But there is another observation to be made in answer to the objection. Many false Christians have appeared; and these have caused much disputation respecting religion. A rash, vehement, and unguarded conduct has often been confounded with zeal for the Gospel. Some persons think that every kind of religious stir in the world is good and desirable. They forget that the Gospel is the Gospel of peace: and should never even be preached in a spirit of hostility and disputation. Reconciliation and peace with God, and peace and love among men, are the chief things which it teaches. Whoever, therefore, in attempting to spread the Gospel is only indulging his own natural passions, should not be considered among the real Christians; nor should his Gospel be accounted to be the true Gospel of Christ.

Having thus answered the objection, let us proceed more particularly to consider the duty which is implied in this precept of Christ—"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." The Christian, then, though by his holy singularity he may innocently cause others to take offence, will himself endeavour to be at peace with every one. He will be engaged in healing quarrels, not in inflaming them; his very profession will be that of a peacemaker. Are any persons at variance?—He is glad to compose strife, to lessen differences, and to calm down all the bad passions of men. His own tempers having been subdued and regulated by the Gospel, he is qualified to become a mediator to others; and he is willing to become umpire in any dispute, which he can indulge the hope of being able to compose. While other men, by their ungoverned tempers, enter into quarrels themselves, and, also, by the rashness of their tongues, encourage heats and animosities in others, the Christian is prudent and gentle: he fears lest, by spreading a false tale, or by making a hasty charge, or by taking too strong a side either with one party or another, he should be the means of increasing feuds; he therefore keeps his tongue as with a bridle; he

does not repeat one half the tales which he has heard, because he knows that peace will best be promoted by his silence; and he prefers peace to the indulgence of his vanity, or of his talkativeness. Do any speak violently to him? He does not answer them as violently, for he wishes to be at peace with them; he is such a lover of peace that he will not break it, though he should be reflected on for his quietness. He pursues this cautious plan, healing many quarrels, and causing none; and labouring to bring all men to love one another. War and discord are his aversion. A national war he will be slow to justify: he will join in it only on the ground of self-defence, and of its appearing not to be avoided with safety. And lastly, he will be a promoter of peace in matters of religion. "The wisdom which is from above, is first *pure*, indeed, and then *peaceable*." It is pure in the first place, and peaceable in the second. After looking well, therefore, in the first place to the purity of religion, he will next consider how peace may best be consulted. "Peace, he will say, as well as grace, be with all them that love the LORD JESUS in sincerity." He will rate very highly the importance of preserving peace in the Church of GOD; and will be very fearful of multiplying sects and creating needless dissension. He knows that edification is best promoted amidst the tranquillity of the Church: for the "fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." It is not sown amidst the noisy disputation and virulent invectives of angry and contending parties.

VIII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 10, 11, 12.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake:

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Our Saviour here sets before his disciples the opposition and persecution which they were to expect in this world, on the one hand; and the glorious reward in a life to come, on the other. His doctrine would, in this respect, seem new to his hearers. The Pharisees were of a religion which brought to them much honour from men; and the general body of the Jews had no idea that a man's religious faith would expose him to trial and persecution. The religion, indeed, both of the Pharisees, and of the body of the Jews, was an easy and popular religion; it was not the struggling religion of a minority. The professors of it had only to swim with the stream; they neither combated their own natural corruption, nor the common errors and iniquities of the age.

In this respect the disciples of Christ were to differ from the Jews; and of this difference our Saviour gives notice, in the passage which we are considering. It is, as if He had said, "Think not that if you are my followers, all men shall speak well of you. Far from it;—if you follow me, you must expect much reproach." The servants of God have in all ages been the objects of censure to those who lived at the same time with them; though they may have been extolled by the worldly people of succeeding ages. Learn, therefore, to consider the opposition of the age in which you live, as a proof that you are followers of

the Prophets who went before you; and be content to be as ill received as they. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake: Rejoice and be exceeding glad." Account yourselves happy in the midst of your persecutions; for great is your reward in Heaven. Look forward to that immense recompense which awaits you; and which shall be proportioned to your persecutions here on earth. Take care, indeed, that you are reviled not for that which is evil, but for that which is good. Be sure that whatever is said against you, be said "falsely," and "for my sake." Let the reproach be on account of faithfulness to my cause; and while you continue thus faithful and thus reproached, not only be not cast down, but rejoice, even, and be exceeding glad; for "great is your reward in Heaven."

Such was our SAVIOUR's language to his disciples; and it is no small proof of the truth of his religion that it was received under such discouraging circumstances. They embraced persecutions and tribulations, having been told to expect them; but they embraced at the same time the hope of eternal glory; and this hope supported them, even under the pains of martyrdom. Though, for a time, fearful and weak in faith: yet, when endued with that "power from on high," which they received on the day of Pentecost, they learned to fear the face of no man. We find, that, when beaten with many stripes, "they rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of CHRIST;" we read, also, that Paul and Silas, when in prison, "sung praises to GOD;" and we hear the Apostle thus expressing himself—"For Thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"

Let us now consider how far we are to apply this passage to ourselves.

And, first, it shall be allowed, that the same persecution, to which the Apostles and early Christians were exposed, by no means threatens us. The world is now governed by better laws: and this is one reason why the modern Christian does not experience the same degree of ill-treatment: another reason is, that the faith of CHRIST has now been established. The Christian minister of this day does not like the Apostles, proclaim a faith entirely new; he does not oppose as they did, all the professed opinions of men Still, however, the case is not altogether changed. Persecution indeed has, generally speaking, ceased; but opposition to the Gospel of CHRIST (we mean to the Gospel preached and practised in its primitive purity and strictness) certainly has not. It is but too plain, that the world at this day is not truly Christian; and that, even in Christian lands, the majority are very unchristian people. Vice and wickedness prevail openly in many places. Practical infidelity is in the hearts of thousands who fancy themselves to be true believers: and every where we meet with unchristian maxims, sentiments, and customs. It is, therefore, as plain a duty in the modern Christian to resist the stream of the world, as ever it was in the primitive one. Like the prophets of old, he has to bear his testimony on the side of GOD and holiness; amidst a multitude of gainsayers. He has not to expose, like the Apostles, his back to stripes, and his life to martyrdom. But since he is delivered from these greater trials, let him the more cheerfully endure the smaller. Let him not fear to assert his Christian singularity, to resist the corrupt customs of this generation, and to avoid those amusements of the world which are accommodated to its unchristian taste, and are unbecoming the purity and strictness of the Gospel. Let him refuse, in short, in a thousand instances, to do as others do; and let him practise many things which others, deeming them unnecessary strictnesses, do not care to practise. Let him

sometimes reprove others for their sins,—a duty which is indeed quite indispensable in Christian ministers. Finally, let him, who has as yet experienced no opposition, examine whether his faith and his practice be not accommodated to the taste of the world in a manner quite unauthorized by Scripture; and if the dread of opposition have been the hindrance to his profession of a purer Christianity, let him remember WHO hath said, "Except a man take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple;" and "except a man forsake even his father and mother and wife and children (when they are his hindrance in the Gospel,) yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And again, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father, and with his holy Angels."

IX.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 13, 14, 15, 16.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill, cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

How high an idea of Christianity does our SAVIOUR here present to us. Christians are the "salt of the earth." In them ought to be that savour by which the whole world is to be seasoned. Again, Christians are the "light of the world." By them is the moral darkness of this wicked world to be enlightened And again, "they are like a city

set upon a hill." They are to be conspicuous to all around, for their superior virtue and excellence. Such did CHRIST, when He was on earth, require his disciples to be; and such in fact they were, in the first ages of the Church. In these degenerate days an opinion prevails, and even among many who call themselves Christians, that we should not be particular in any respect; that we ought not to profess any more religion than our neighbours; that it is presumptuous to suppose that we can enlighten others; and illiberal to think that our own mode of faith is the best. But how inconsistent is such language with these sayings of CHRIST! Are we not required to be singular? It is to be feared, that they, who entertain sentiments so lowering to the character of religion, are the persons who are condemned in the latter part of the thirteenth verse. I mean that they are salt which has "lost its savour,"—Christians without the spirit of Christianity; and, just as salt, which has become tasteless, is only "fit to be cast on the ground, and trodden under foot of men," so are these ordinary and insipid Christians fit only to be cast out of the Christian Church.

Let us now, more particularly, consider the duty required by these words of CHRIST. Undoubtedly it is not intended by them that we should be ostentatious in our religion; for we are commanded to be "poor in spirit" and to be meek and lowly in heart. CHRIST, nevertheless, must mean to insist that there should be such a character and tone in our religion, as shall distinguish us from the world. He expects the difference between us and other men to be so great, that other men shall be struck by that difference. This is the manner in which He has ordained that the work of converting mankind shall be carried on. Our light is so to shine before men, that they (seeing our good works) may glorify our Father which is in heaven. CHRIST has appointed preaching to be one of the means of extending His kingdom: but He has not more plainly directed ministers to preach, than He has com-

manded private Christians so to shine by their life and conversation that men may thereby be brought to the knowledge of the Gospel. A Christianity, therefore, which has in it nothing particular, which exhibits no other virtue than that of many infidels, which allows its professors to conform themselves to the world, and in no respect rises above mediocrity, is no Christianity in His sight: for how can he, who has none of that higher virtue which attracts notice, be compared to "a city set on a hill which cannot be hid?"—How can he, who never endeavoured by the brightness of his example to enlighten the circle of his worldly neighbours, be likened to "a candle which is set upon a candlestick, and giveth light to all that are in the house?"—And how can he, who does not differ from the mass of mankind, be compared to salt, by the virtue of which the rest of the world is to be seasoned? Such persons should stand reproved by these sayings of CHRIST: and, indeed, there is scarcely a sentence in this Sermon on the Mount, which might not reprove them.

But we may also apply this passage to the case of some seriously disposed persons; we mean to the case of those who are so engrossed by the consideration of the remaining corruptions of their nature, and so fearful both of ostentation in religion, and of self-righteousness, that they do not enough consider themselves as called by Christianity to an open profession of their faith, and an open exercise of their good works. It is true, that we are directed to let our alms be in secret, and not let our left hand know what our right hand doeth. But are we not instructed in this passage, that we are to resemble a candle, which men do not put under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to the whole house? There is, therefore, a middle way between Pharisaical ostentation, and a false and studied humility. Our works should be seen, though they should not be done in order to be seen. They should be so far plain and public, that men may be led by them "to glorify our Father which is in heaven."

May our light in every respect shine before men! may we, as citizens of the government under which we live, as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as masters and servants, fulfil the duties of our several stations in a manner so exemplary and striking, that all those who are acquainted with us may acknowledge how excellent a thing it is to be a Christian.

X.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 17—19.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

One error of the Jews, and one ground of their prejudice against Christ, consisted in an opinion that He was come "to destroy the law and the prophets:"—that is, to overthrow whatsoever Moses and the prophets had said. Christ here declares that He came for the very contrary purpose: 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

The religion of Moses came from God. The one, therefore, could not be contrary to the other. Christ was not the rival, or the enemy, of Moses; and consequently, it ought not to be supposed, that the Jews who joined themselves to Christ, apostatized from their own lawgiver.

It is true, that, after the coming of Christ, many ceremonies belonging to the former dispensation were abolished; for these were no longer necessary. They had been

"figures for the time then present." They had been established in order to prefigure CHRIST; and to supply some divine information of the doctrines, which He and his apostles were more fully to reveal. CHRIST on this account ought to be considered as having come to fulfil the law and the prophets, not to overthrow them. He fulfilled that which was said by the prophets,—by accomplishing their prophecies concerning Himself. He fulfilled that which was said by Moses,—by accomplishing the types and ceremonies which Moses had enjoined. He also fulfilled the *law* of Moses, by being himself perfectly obedient to that law: and He fulfilled it, by requiring from His disciples obedience to all the moral parts of it; an obedience indeed, far stricter than that which was paid to it by the Pharisees. "Verily I say unto you," said CHRIST, "till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled: whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." How does CHRIST do honour to the law by these words. Woe be to those, who, though they may profess to honour it, do not honour it by their obedience Some have fancied, that to speak contemptuously of the *Law*, is a sign of their proficiency in the *Gospel*. "Since the Gospel," say they, "is the Gospel of Grace, there is no necessity to be obedient to the Law; for the Law cannot justify us." It is true, that our obedience is imperfect; and, since it is imperfect, cannot save us. We must be justified by CHRIST alone through faith. But this doctrine of justification by faith does not diminish the necessity of obedience. Let us reflect on the nature of the Law; it commands love to GOD and love to man; and can any man doubt whether it be a duty to love GOD and his fellow-creatures? He who violates the Law, even in the least point, and teaches others to despise it, is said by CHRIST to be "the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever

shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Doubtless, the meaning of this expression is, that CHRIST will estimate the character of the members of His Church by the degree of their obedience. This is our SAVIOUR'S mode of judging. May it be ours also. He who fails the most in obedience to the law, is accounted by CHRIST the least of His disciples; and he, who rises highest in obedience, shall also rise highest in the kingdom of GOD.

XI.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 20.

For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

THE Scribes were the expounders of the Jewish law; and the Pharisees were reputed the strictest sect among the Jews. Both the Scribes and Pharisees were held in high reputation by the people. This saying of CHRIST, therefore, would exceedingly surprise His hearers. Must we then be stricter, they would say, than the strictest sect of the Jews?—more religious than our very teachers in religion? Our SAVIOUR, nevertheless, ought not to be considered severe, on account of this expression. The case was this: The Scribes and Pharisees were corrupt, both in doctrine and practice: they were "blind leaders of the blind." Nothing, therefore, could be more essential to the success of the Gospel than the exposure of their error and wickedness. How prejudicial, indeed, to the cause of true religion has the corruption of priests ever been! The stream in that case is polluted at the fountain; and if there

should be a disposition in the people to admire a false and hypocritical priesthood, as was the case in the days of CHRIST, and again, at the period of the Reformation, the strongest measures may be necessary, in order to expose the existing danger, and to introduce the light of true religion.

Let us now proceed to consider in what respects the righteousness of the followers of CHRIST was to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

And, first, it was to exceed, inasmuch as the righteousness of the followers of CHRIST was to be inward and real; while that of the Scribes and Pharisees was merely in appearance. The sanctity of the Pharisee was an altogether external and affected sanctity. He loved to clothe himself in a long robe; and to receive frequent greetings in the market place; and to be called, Rabbi. He made in the very streets long prayers; gave alms in the most public manner; and thus endeavoured to attract the veneration of the people. He did all to be seen of men.

It may be material here to remark, that, in these days, vanity will not show itself in the same manner. Devotion is not in the same credit now, as in the days of the Pharisees. Men are sometimes tempted in our age to lay claim to less religion than they really possess, rather than to pretend that they have more. The love of estimation led the Pharisee to say long prayers. Let us beware, lest our love of estimation should ever lead us to neglect saying our prayers, through the fear of some fellow-creature who may be present. We may be guilty of the same sin with the Pharisee; and yet act in a different, and even a contrary, manner.

The vanity of the Pharisee, was his sin. Beware, then, of vanity. Act not, as he did, from mere regard to character. Be not honest, only from a regard to character. Be not sober, only from a regard to character. Be not chaste, only from a regard to character. If reputation be the spring of all your morality, then your morality is just as superficial, as was the religion of the Pharisees.

Again, the righteousness of Christians must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, inasmuch as it must be universal, and not partial. The Pharisees discharged some duties, and overlooked others. They performed the smaller, and omitted the greater. They paid tithes on mint, cummin, and anise; but they neglected the weighter matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and truth; they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. Let us beware of selecting certain parts of duty which are easy, and of slighting others; and especially of being very scrupulous in small things, and yet far from conscientious in great. Let us endeavour to fulfil *every* duty; for "he, that keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty of all; for the same GOD who hath said, thou shalt not commit adultery, hath said also thou shalt not steal:—Now therefore, if thou commit not adultery, yet if thou steal, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

Lastly, our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, inasmuch as they carried no virtue to its proper height. They fell short of true goodness. It was the habit of the Scribe to lower the meaning of Scripture, to explain down the law of GOD, to devise exceptions to it, to make abatements from it. The Scripture had no force or strength, no strictness of meaning, no heart-searching quality, when interpreted by these teachers. Let us be fearful of all lax expositions of the word of GOD,—of all worldly ways of understanding it. The Scribes "took away the key of knowledge;" and the Scripture being perverted by the priests, neither true religion, nor true morality, prevailed among the people. The particular nature of those erroneous interpretations of Scripture, which the Pharisees introduced, is in some degree explained by CHRIST in the passage which we shall have next to consider.

XII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 21—26.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

We have here an example of the manner in which our Saviour explained the precept of the law of Moses. "Thou shalt not kill," was one precept of it. The Scribes and Pharisees interpreted this, as forbidding only the direct act of murder: and thought it sufficient to bring the men who had committed this crime before one of their courts Such was their interpretation of this law; "Whosoever shall kill," said they, "shall be in danger of the judgment. Christ, however, considered, that the sin of murder proceeded from anger in the heart; and He, therefore, interprets the prohibition of murder, as a prohibition of anger also. He likewise explains this law, as forbidding every degree of hatred which is without a cause: in doing which He uses some expressions, of which the meaning was then probably familiar to the Jews, though now become a little obscure; we mean the expressions of "Raca," and "Thou fool." He also intimates, that in whatever degree men

indulge their anger against each other, in the same degree will GOD be angry with them: and he does this by alluding to the several Jewish courts of law, some of which took cognisance of the smaller offences, and others of the greater, each inflicting a proportionate punishment. The *judgment* was the lower court; the *council* was the next; and the word "*hell-fire*" stands for the highest punishment which could be inflicted by the highest court,—the punishment of being burnt alive.

Our SAVIOUR then proceeds to remark, that he who entertains in his mind any hatred against his brother, cannot be an acceptable worshipper of GOD:—a most important truth, and one which we ought to call to mind, as often as we engage in divine worship. If, therefore, He says, "thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come, and offer thy gift." He then advises those who have any quarrel, to agree with their adversary quickly; and by adverting to the present consequences, which, in this world, attend the delay of the reconciliation, suggests the line of conduct, which it is our highest wisdom to pursue.

Let us make some practical application of this part of the subject. The Pharisees offered up many a sacrifice to GOD, with hearts full of ill-will to their neighbours. Their religion was also on this account a religion which GOD abhorred: He will have a pure heart in his worshippers He will accept no worship for Himself, while His worshipper is at enmity with his neighbour. The Church of England expects her members to examine whether they are in charity with all men, before they venture to receive the sacrament. Nothing can be more seasonable than such an expectation. This passage, however, may suggest the propriety of questioning ourselves, on the same point, not only then, but, also, as often as we offer up our worship; since there is no part of it which is consistent with an

angry state of the heart. He that would acceptably worship God must also love his neighbour.

Are we then well assured that we indulge no malice or hatred? Is none of this seed of murder in our hearts? Let it not satisfy us to say that we would not kill. This was the scanty morality of the Pharisees. This was their narrow way of explaining the law. Christ hath taught us a larger interpretation of it. Are we followers of Christ,—and have we learnt from Him fully to examine ourselves on this point? Do we perceive the sin, even of an angry word or of an angry motion within the heart? Do we therefore watch the heart? Do we keep the heart (as David expresses it) with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life? Is our religion a religion of the heart, and not of the knee only, and of the lip? In vain do we repair to the house of God; in vain do we prostrate our bodies before Him; in vain does our tongue make even the fullest profession of our guilt; in vain is all our Christian confidence and hope; if we maintain a quarrel against any:—if we do not in our hearts love every man his neighbour:—"for he that hateth his brother," says the Apostle, "is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."*

These observations seem particularly applicable to persons of a very narrow and sectarian spirit; to those, I mean, whose religion, like that of the Jews, has rendered them severe, unsocial, and uncharitable. Men of this class are in great danger of carrying their religious hatred of some opposite sect, up to their very house of worship. It is true, that we should neither tolerate the heresies of any sect, nor the sins of any individual; we should nevertheless anxiously inquire, whether our religious opposition to the errors of men may not degenerate into hatred of them, and thus corrupt our religious service. Let us breathe, especially when we are in the house of prayer, a spirit of kindness

* 1 St. John, iii. 15.

and reconciliation towards all. Let us remember, that "love is of GOD;" and that he is the most likely to be both pure in his own worship, and right in his own creed, who most loves GOD and his fellow-creatures; "for he, that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now:" and "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another."

XIII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 27, 28

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery:

But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

WE have here another instance of the strict manner in which our SAVIOUR explains the law of Moses. The seventh commandment had said "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" and the Jews, after the example of the Scribes and Pharisees, seem to have considered actual adultery alone as forbidden by it; a crime which prudence, which reputation, which self-interest, which the most common regard to conscience might be sufficient to prevent; and which was far from common, even among many heathen nations. Was this then the whole sin which the religion of CHRIST was to forbid? Was it fit, or was it even to be tolerated, that the law of Moses should be so interpreted, that a man might fully obey that law, and yet be no better than many heathen? CHRIST in this passage gives a most extensive meaning to this law; and thus rescues it out of the corrupt hands of the Scribes and Pharisees: "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust

after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." How awful is this saying! Is there not then an irregular thought, however deeply hidden in the heart which can be indulged without the commission of this sin? How great is that purity to which we thus find ourselves called; and how are all men brought in guilty before GOD! "Blessed," our SAVIOUR had already said, "are the pure in heart; for they shall see GOD." The SON OF GOD came from heaven that He might purify the sons of Levi; and baptize men with the Holy Ghost and with fire; that He might put his law in their inward parts, and write it on the table of their hearts: He came to abolish that scanty and superficial system of morality, which the Scribes and Pharisees had established; and with which the people of all ages have been apt to satisfy themselves: He came to substitute, in the place of it, a religion which should govern the most secret thoughts, and should be seated in the heart; a religion which, by discovering to man the exalted nature of true purity, should also reveal to him his own corruption; should teach him, therefore, to come as a sinner to his GOD, and to trust in that Sacrifice which in due time was to be offered up for the sins of the world.

The words of CHRIST in this passage may seem strict. Let us, however, ask ourselves, whether the most effectual means of preventing the highest degrees of a sin, be not to check that sin in the first rising thought. Men commonly are betrayed into great crimes, nearly in the following manner. First, an evil thought occurs; and they indulge it, saying; "Surely, there can be no harm in allowing to my imagination so trifling a latitude as this." The sin is, at first, despised as too little to deserve regard. The evil thought having been allowed to enter, a second evil thought is added to the first. The mind is now possessed; and the imagination becomes inflamed. And, now, the temptation, which had been despised for its insignificance, appears so powerful (as Satan in this stage of the trial would persuade us) that it is no longer possible to resist it: and the same

sin, which was at first tolerated through presumption, is at last submitted to in despair.

How merciful then is our Saviour in thus inspiring us with that fear of the risings of sin, by which we are led to resist its first assault. May we then learn to watch the heart. May we resist sin there. And may we remember that not only the sin here spoken of, but that all sin takes its rise in the same manner; and must be resisted in its first beginnings. May we direct our attention to the secret motions of our own minds. May God, by His Spirit, give us light to discern not only every licentious, but every envious, angry, vain, and self-exalting thought, every discontented and repining thought; and give us grace to suppress them, before they break out into words or actions. May He cleanse all the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.

XIV.

ST MATTHEW, V. 29, 30.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Our Saviour in this passage, as in many others, speaks metaphorically. The right eye and the right hand are some of our most valuable members. They are so dear to us that no man would be willing to part with them, unless it were for the sake of saving his life. If, indeed the life can be saved by sacrificing one of these, and by no other means, then undoubtedly a man may be supposed willing to

make the sacrifice. Such is our way of judging in temporal things; and it is by appealing to our conduct in common life, that our SAVIOUR often teaches us spiritual wisdom. "If," says He, "thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee;" that is, if there be any thing, however dear to thee, which causes thee to sin, part with it, and remove it far from thee; for it is better to enter into life, having one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. As it is wise in the case of the body to preserve the life at the expense of having only one eye: so it is wise, also, in the case of the soul, to sacrifice the dearest object rather than to retain it at the hazard of the life of the soul. So, also, if our right hand offend us, we are told to "cut it off, and cast it from us; for it is better to enter into life having one hand; than having two hands, to be cast into hell fire." Our SAVIOUR, by repeating his expression, increases the strength of His remark: and by speaking of plucking out an eye, in the one case, and of cutting off a hand, in the other, He seems to intimate, that not *one* favourite object only, but *every* favourite object which proves an occasion of sin, must be sacrificed. In one of the other Evangelists, (St. Mark, ix. 44, 46, 48,) He is represented as awfully addressing Himself to our fears on this subject, by adding the words, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." He, who so loves his sin as to say that he cannot part with it, would do well to weigh these tremendous words of CHRIST. It may be hard to part with a favourite sin; but it is still harder to dwell with everlasting burnings. It may be a painful task to remove ourselves out of the way of a temptation; but it will be still more painful, after having been taken in the snare of the Devil, and led captive by him at his will, to share the condemnation of that Evil Spirit, and to be commanded to depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

The fear of hell is often a salutary and most necessary fear. Many a man would never break from his sins with

out it. Our lusts and passions are often very importunate; they seem as if they would not be refused indulgence. They are not always to be checked by fears of an inferior sort. The condemnation of the soul must be set before men, as the sure consequence of persisting in the indulgence of a favourite passion; for CHRIST himself hath said it. Even the compassionate SAVIOUR hath said it. He, who was so merciful as to go about healing all manner of sick—He, who came down from heaven to save us, and to die for us, nevertheless cannot, will not, save us, (as is plain from this as well as from many other passages,) if we will hold fast our iniquity. We ought, therefore, to learn, from this metaphorical expression of CHRIST, the danger of living on in any wilful sin.

But we may also learn from it, secondly, the peril of remaining in the way of temptation. Some persons, finding themselves repeatedly betrayed into great guilt, and being much wounded in their consciences, resolve to yield no more to the sin which has so often grieved them, and determine, also, to avoid *in some degree* those societies, those circumstances, and those places, which have proved the occasion of their falling. They resolve to avoid these *in some degree*, but not *in a sufficient degree;* for, if the sin be fallen into again and again, it is then rendered plain by experience, that they ought to remove themselves still farther from temptation. But they will not advance a sufficient length in the case in question: that is, they will not proceed so far as to contradict some worldly companion who is their tempter; or to sacrifice some worldly interest which is their snare; or to abstain from some scene of dissipation, where their virtue is put to greater trial than it can bear. Such persons, though they have made, it is true, some feeble opposition to the tyrant sin which has possession of them, can by no means be said, according to the strong language of our SAVIOUR, to have plucked out their right eye, or to have cut off their right hand and cast it from them. They have as yet been on the plan of sparing

themselves; they have not had the heart to pay the price which is necessary for their deliverance; and hence they continue enslaved. Let such persons gather instruction from these words of CHRIST. Let them remember that even the most innocent thing, if it prove a snare, must be plucked out, and cast from them, though it be done with as much pain as if they were plucking out the eye, or cutting off the hand, which is most dear to them.

It is better surely to do this, it is better surely to affront our friend, to sacrifice our profit, or to absent ourselves from our accustomed place of entertainment, than having kept our friend, having increased our wealth, and having retained our amusement, to be cast into hell fire. It is better to be safe landed in Heaven, though at the expense of having in this world bereaved ourselves of some things which seemed as dear to us, as if they had been a part of ourselves. It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, than, having two eyes or two hands, to be cast into hell fire; where, as already quoted from St. Mark, "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

XV.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 31, 32.

It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

CHRIST in this place, extends the law of Moses; for that law had allowed divorces to take place in cases in which CHRIST no longer permits them. It however had never been intended, that divorces should become so light and

easy as they were become among the Jews. Whilst, therefore, the Pharisees were loosening the obligations of the law, CHRIST was giving to it additional strictness. The case was this: The law of Moses was suited to the age in which it was given, and to the dispensation of religion under which the Jews lived; and not, in all particulars, equally accommodated to the new dispensation which was introduced by CHRIST. For Christianity, by affording a clear knowledge of GOD, and of all the doctrines of the Gospel, brought men under stricter obligations. Moses allowed some things to subsist for a while among the Jews; and this among the rest; on account of the hardness of their hearts, as is observed by CHRIST in the 19th ch. of this Gospel: "but from the beginning," our SAVIOUR there adds, "it was not so;" and He now, therefore, as the new law-giver of the Jews, enjoins a stricter rule, both on them, and on all his followers. CHRIST goes farther than Moses, in several particulars. CHRIST sometimes speaks where Moses is silent. CHRIST, at other times, extends to the spirit, what Moses had chiefly spoken of in the letter. CHRIST carried every part of morality to a sublimer height.

Two things may be observed in this passage. First, let us learn from it how strictly Christians ought to think of the bonds of marriage. Let us not lend an ear to that false philosophy which would utterly break these bonds, as well as all others:—which would allow men again to obtain divorces according to their humour; a philosophy which would thus throw back the world into that state in which the Jewish people were left only for a while, and on account of the hardness of their hearts; and out of which CHRIST hath delivered us. The prohibition of CHRIST is like all his prohibitions, merciful. How hard is the situation of the children of those who are divorced! and on this ground how inexpedient is it to multiply divorces! a child often needs the aid, almost equally, of its father and of its mother towards its education and support in life. How mischievous, also, to the parents is a system of unre-

strained divorce! If all men were to marry with the knowledge that they might, when they pleased, send away their wife, how light a ceremony would marriage become. And how dismal, in particular, would be the case of the female sex. Among other reasons for valuing Christianity, let us value it on account of this law against arbitrary divorce.

Our other remark is general. Let us learn, from this passage, to consider CHRIST as calling us, in every respect, to greater purity of morals than was attained in the ancient periods of the world. The Gentiles were left chiefly to the light of their own conscience. They had no written law of GOD. The times, therefore, of their ignorance GOD is said in Scripture to have winked at; though now He hath "commanded all men every where to repent,"* and to "believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ."†

The Jews had a dispensation of religion which was dark compared with ours. They, had, indeed, more instruction, than we, in many ceremonials of worship: and, since the LORD was their king, and their nation a theocracy; they had a code of laws relating to civil government. In all that regards the substance of religion, the Jewish dispensation was certainly inferior. To them the doctrines of our Gospel were less clearly taught; and the rule of morals was less strictly and spiritually laid down.

Let us, then, remember, that we, Christians, are called both to higher spirituality in our devotion, and to a stricter morality. Let us reflect, that as, in a heathen, many things were winked at by GOD, which would not have been equally winked at in a Jew; so also were many things tolerated in a Jew, which will not now be allowed in a Christian. Among the Jews, polygamy was practised; and though not expressly allowed, it seems not to have been directly condemned. The minds of men were in those ages more dark, in many respects, than the light, in which we live, allows us to conceive. We have had line upon line, and

* Acts xvii. 30. † 1 St. John iii. 23.

precept upon precept. In our days how fully has every branch of moral duty been defined! how clearly are many points important to our happiness in relative and social, as well as in political life, which were scarcely adverted to in the remote ages, now laid down, and understood! How do we stand indebted to CHRIST, the great sun of righteousness, for introducing that moral light which has so greatly illuminated these latter ages of the world.

May we walk worthy of it. May we be as exact in our practice, as we are instructed in the details of morality, as well as in the articles of our faith. May we remember that the darkness is past; and that we are children of the light and of the day. May we not *walk* in darkness. May every mark of that inferior state of morals, which characterized the ancient times, be done away. And in particular, may the laws of marriage be upheld by our government, and respected by our people.

XVI.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 33—37.

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the Great King.
Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
But let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

OUR SAVIOUR here prohibits common and profane swearing. Is it then possible, that this vice can have place among those who call themselves Christians? He explains himself clearly by naming several kinds of profane-

ness which were in use in His days; and He forbids both these and all similar asseverations, adding, "Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay;" that is, let your conversation consist, as much as possible, in plain yes and no, in simple affirmation and denial, "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil."

It is melancholy to reflect how little this precept of CHRIST is regarded; and it may be useful to inquire, how it happens, that a sin so distinctly forbidden, and producing so little profit, is so common in a Christian land.

Profane swearing has prevailed in various countries and ages. The heathen abounded much in oaths; as the books now extant, which describe their familiar conversation, most clearly show; and we need not wonder, that the names of the gods and demi-gods, whom they worshipped, should have been used as expletives in ordinary discourse. Divinities like these were not likely to excite the smallest degree of reverence in the mind. The Jews, who lived at the time of CHRIST, appear to have fallen into the same habit of swearing. As the heathens swore by their temples and altars, so the Jews seem to have sworn by the temple at Jerusalem, and by other things sacred in their worship. The Pharisees had tolerated, and in some degree regulated, this profane habit. They forbad some oaths, and capriciously allowed of others, as appears from the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew. They seemed to have pleaded Scripture in favour of this permission; as if the precept which commanded men to perform unto the LORD their vows, authorized common swearing, and a general disposition to trifle with serious things.

Our SAVIOUR corrects this error of the Pharisees; and, in correcting it, He promulgates a new law on the subject. He lays down his rule so strictly, that some sects in our country (not sufficiently attending, as we think, to the style of spiritual language, and to the *spirit* of this precept) have supposed that an oath taken in a judicial cause is prohibited among Christians.

The ground on which CHRIST rests his present prohibition, is the point to which I would call your attention. We are not to swear, He says, "by *Heaven, because it is God's throne; nor by the earth, because it is His footstool.*" He thus points out to us, that reverence for God ought to prevent profane swearing,—reverence, I mean, for that GOD who made heaven and earth; and who ought not to be confounded with the gods of the heathen; and who should be had in honour by all those who profess to call upon Him.

Here then we discover the root of that profaneness which is now so common among Christians. GOD is not honoured by us. Though He is the Creator of all things; though He is the preserver of our lives, though He is the source of all our hopes both in this world, and the world to come, though He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; though He has abounded towards us in all goodness and mercy; yet we feel little reverence for Him. We trifle, we sport with His sacred name, as the heathen did with the names of their Jupiter, their Hercules, and their Apollo. He is to us what their gods and demi-gods were to them. We profess, indeed, like the Jews, to worship the true JEHOVAH; but, like the Jews, we show, by the levity with which we treat sacred things, that we are a nation of degenerate and nominal worshippers. Our profaneness, indeed, is more criminal than theirs; because we have clearer light than they had; we have also a most plain and strict injunction given us in this passage against the very sin in question.

Let us then fear to provoke GOD by the breach of this commandment. Let us reverence His name; and, for His sake, respect every thing which is holy. Let us even reprove, as far as becomes us, all profaneness in others. Let plainness and simplicity characterize our conversation. Let us avoid every kind of needless asseveration. Let us cultivate calmness of temper and seriousness of mind; thus shall we be kept from every breach of this commandment.

XVII.

ST. MATTHEW, V 38—42.

Ye have heard, that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth:
But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.
And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Our Saviour, in this passage, proceeds to explain in what manner the righteousness of his followers was to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. "Ye have heard," says He, "that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." This law of exact retaliation had been given to the Jews by God, in His character of their lawgiver and king. It was the law, according to which the Jewish judge was to deliver sentence against offenders; it was not a rule intended to authorize revenge among private individuals; though it probably was so construed by the Scribes and Pharisees. They seem to have interpreted that part of their civil law,—which, by saying an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, prescribed a principle of exact justice to the magistrate—as sanctioning the sentiment, that justice is all which is required of men in their individual capacity; and as justifying every one in exacting in all cases the utmost extent of his due.

Christ forbids this construction of the Mosaic law; and He subjoins some precepts of a contrary nature, which are extremely characteristic of His religion. "But I say unto you," says He, "that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the

other also." Certainly, expressions of this kind are not to be taken literally: but let us beware of an altogether loose interpretation. Let us not in this respect imitate the Pharisees. They interpreted the Old Testament in such a manner as to favour their own corrupt prejudices: let us not bend the New to our crooked and imperfect practice.

The meaning of all those strong expressions of our SAVIOUR, which we are now considering, may be thus explained. It is, as if He had said, "Think not because the law hath declared, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, that it will justify that spirit of private resentment and retaliation which it is made to do. Such indeed is the perverse turn given to it by your Scribes and Pharisees But I am come to prescribe to you a far higher rule of duty I teach that a man not only must not resent injuries, and demand reparation to the utmost, but must learn patiently to endure injuries, and to forbear from any revenge whatever. "I SAY UNTO YOU THAT YE RESIST NOT EVIL." There must be such a spirit in my followers, that however great may be the ill-treatment which they receive, they must be willing quietly to suffer it; as much so as if, when a man were to smite thee on the right cheek, thou wert to turn to him the other also. Revenge is utterly excluded out of my code. The law of My Kingdom is that of the free forgiveness of each other.

Neither must ye be tenacious in any respect of that which is your own. Ye must be of so free and liberal, of so gentle and peaceable, of so kind and disinterested a spirit as to be ready to yield your clearest right, if any good be to be done, as it often is, by renouncing it. "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat," care not for it,—be not eager to defend thyself; "let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile," (instead of becoming resentful and ill-humoured, as men thus unreasonably treated commonly do,) thou, that art my disciple, be willing freely to "go with him twain." And again, "Give to him that asketh of

thee." Aim not merely at acts of justice, but do acts of mercy also. Be willing to give, and ready to communicate. Say not that either thy money or any other worldly possession is thine own; but let the spirit of a large and liberal benevolence, and the feelings of a warm and expansive love dictate whose it shall be. Give, therefore, or lend, as a prudent charity may suggest; and "not grudgingly, for GOD loveth a cheerful giver." "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

Such is incontestibly the meaning of these sayings of CHRIST. Are we then of this spirit? Have we learned in the school of His gospel to bear affronts quietly and meekly; to forgive all men heartily and freely; to take cheerfully less than our due; to condescend to serve even the unthankful and the unreasonable; to give and lend, bountifully and largely: and, moreover, do we deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth?

These are the duties enjoined upon us as Christians. This is the nature of the morality of the gospel. There is a scantiness in the virtue of worldly persons; they may be tolerably honest and just; they may not demand more than their due; but they are also strict in claiming their own. They may wish to hurt no one; but they also insist, that no one shall hurt them. They may give to those from whom they hope to receive something again; as well as to those whom they particularly love: but they cannot endure to do good to the forward, or intruding; or to the unthankful, or unreasonable. They would not do mischief to any one; but they have not learnt to exercise that determined spirit of kindness and condescension, which is absolutely necessary in such a world as this, if ever we would hope to achieve any great good. The virtue which is here recommended to them by CHRIST is too high and heroical for their minds.

It is important to remark, that the *doctrines* of the gospel dispose exactly to the same spirit which is inculcated by

these sayings of our SAVIOUR. CHRIST may be considered as foretelling by means of the various precepts delivered in His sermon on the mount, what should be the character of His followers; when they should be more fully instructed in the truths of His Gospel, and more plentifully endued with the gift of His Holy Spirit. Selfishness is obviously the root of those evil tempers which He has here condemned: and how is selfishness more effectually to be cured than by the contemplation of that great evangelical truth, "ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price?"* "live therefore no longer to yourselves, but unto Him that hath died for you."

XVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 43—48.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.

HERE our SAVIOUR again insists on the necessity of a more than ordinary virtue in His followers; and again reproves the scanty as well as false morality of the Scribes and Pharisees. "Ye have heard," saith He, "how it hath

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." This saying was doubtless common at that time among the Jews. The people assumed, (for how easily do we adopt the errors of our teachers,) that the Old Testament had taught this doctrine. But the Old Testament had said only, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour;" the Pharisees had added, as their inference from these words, "and thou shalt hate thine enemy." Declarations of Scripture had become united in many minds with sayings of the Pharisees; in the same manner in which certain truths of GOD, and sayings of men, are now frequently confounded by credulous and unthinking persons. "But I say unto you," says CHRIST, "love your enemies." This precept was not altogether new. The Old Testament breathed the same spirit, though the New speaks more plainly on this and other points, both of faith and of practice. The word "neighbour," in the Old Testament, when rightly interpreted, has a very large signification. Literally taken, it stands for any one who lives near to us. It is however very naturally applied to all with whom we have any intercourse. It here signifies any one who comes within the sphere of our notice, and within the reach of our benevolence. The command to love our neighbour implies therefore that we are to love all men, not excepting our very enemies; and it is worthy of observation that our SAVIOUR has supplied us with this explanation of the term, by means of the parable of the good Samaritan; a parable which He employed for the reproof of one who had asked the question, "Who is my neighbour?" and who was not aware that even a Samaritan, though of an abhorred sect, might be the neighbour to a Jew. We are then to love, not our friends only, but strangers; and not strangers only, but our very enemies. "Bless them," says He, "that curse you: do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." How high does Christian morality rise in respect to the point before us! This precept is one which may be considered as peculiarly Christian. It is not like

human morality; it is eminently divine. The language of the natural man is that of the Scribes and Pharisees: "I will love my neighbour, and hate my enemy." He is willing to do the one, if he may be allowed also to do the other. The publicans indeed, as CHRIST here says, loved their friends; and yet they were accounted the vilest of the people. There can be little praise, therefore, in such virtue as this. It is a virtue to which many of the most corrupt men are equal. "Love" then, says CHRIST, "your enemies; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

The goodness, which CHRIST teaches, is not that of the natural heart of man; but it is like the goodness of GOD, perfect and universal. GOD is good to all; and we should imitate His perfections. We should be "perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." We should at least aim at perfection like His; and should not content ourselves with that lame and partial virtue with which men are satisfied.

Let us, then, often ask ourselves, whether we fulfil this precept of CHRIST. Do we love our enemies? Do we love those who have injured us, and those whom we think likely to injure us? Do we love men of another nation, of another party, of another religion, of another sect, of another way of thinking in some most interesting particular? If our nation be at war, do we love even those with whom we may think it our duty to contend in battle? Neither public nor private enemy ought to be excepted from this universal law of love.

And how happy would the world become, if a strict obedience were paid to this precept of CHRIST. Men withhold their kindness from their neighbour, because that neighbour has not yet been kind to them: each waits for some act of condescension in the other party. But let us, if we are Christians, take the lead in showing kindness to

every supposed as well as real adversary. "If our enemy hunger, let us feed him; if he thirst, let us give him drink;" for in so doing, we shall quickly subdue his enmity against us; and, as the Apostle expresses it, "shall heap coals of fire on his head."*

XIX.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 1—4.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

The Pharisees did all to be seen of men. They gave alms, they prayed, they performed all their good deeds on this corrupt principle. "Verily," therefore says our Saviour, "they *have* their reward;" that is, they have their reward *now;* they shall have no reward hereafter. God looks not so much at the act done, as at the motive for doing it. Though the deed be good, yet if vanity, if mere regard to character, or any other false principle, prompt us to it, we shall go unrewarded by God. What could be more right than for the Pharisee to give alms? yet the Pharisee, as we are here assured, would have no reward from his Father which is in heaven.

* Romans xii. 20.

The Pharisees, indeed, carried their vanity very far "When thou doest alms," says our SAVIOUR, "do not sound a trumpet before thee as the hypocrites," (or Pharisees) "do :" that is, do not proclaim, as it were by sound of trumpet, thine own almsgiving, or other good deeds. Do not publish thine own praises. The vanity of the Pharisees was gross; but all vanity is forbidden. The good breeding of modern times usually restrains even those who are vain at heart, from extolling themselves; and yet it leaves to them a thousand *indirect* means of self-exaltation. Indeed, vanity itself sometimes renders men proficients in the art of seeming to lay aside their vanity; for it is a polite and creditable art: and therefore, although the well-bred person of modern days may seem far removed from the sin of the Pharisees, although he may not sound a trumpet before him as they did, yet he may be as vain as a Pharisee in his heart. But let us each examine ourselves strictly on this general subject. Are we prompted to perform those good things which we do, chiefly by the desire of *appearing well before men?* Do we love, not so much *to do right*, as to be *thought* to do right? Ask yourselves this question: "Supposing all my acquaintance to recommend something which I know to be wrong, should I dare to act against their judgment? And supposing them all to frown upon me for doing right, should I proceed to do it?" If your conscience cannot give a reply, which is in any degree satisfactory, then you, like the Pharisee, are under the dominion of the love of praise. Men in general are enslaved by this principle. Witness the endeavours which they use to conform their conduct to public opinion; witness their own acknowledgment that their leading motive is a regard to character; witness their attention to external acts of virtue, and their inattention to secret and self-denying duties; witness their dread of being thought singular. There is, indeed, an *extreme* of vice into which they rarely fall. But is not Christian virtue practised almost as rarely? Is not true holiness almost as much

avoided as gross sin? And for the same reason; both are discreditable. It is discreditable to be very profligate, to lie, or to steal. It is also discreditable in this age to be accounted stricter than others in religion; and therefore men choose to be neither in one extreme, as they call it, nor in the other; that is, neither to practise Christian virtue, nor to yield themselves up to notorious vice. Regard to character is the motive to all that middling kind of virtue which most abounds: and since regard to character is the motive, since all is done in order to be seen of men, they shall have no reward from their Father which is in heaven. These persons are not in favour with GOD; these are not the true Christians. We must look to persons who are aiming at a higher virtue, at a virtue to which love of reputation will not carry them, in order to find even the existence of true Christian grace. Alas! how many decent and respectable persons would find themselves unchristianized if they would attend to this one consideration.

But let our attention be turned chiefly to ourselves. And does our imagination never present to us the idea of some admiring friend or group of friends, whose expected praise is the incentive to the diligence which we are using, to the self-denial which we are practising, and to the honourable deeds which we are performing? Is our mind apt to ruminate on the complimentary things likely to be said to us, by this or the other man? Is it a very mortifying thing to us, to be disappointed of some expected praise, and a bitter thing to be blamed? Does our heart sink at the thought of having to face unpopularity and reproach?—On what principle do we choose our friends and acquaintance? Do we cultivate familiarity chiefly with those who gratify our vanity, with those who flatter our persons, admire our wit, judge highly of our talents, respect our judgment, and approve our sayings? and on the contrary, do we dislike those, however amiable and excellent, who perceive our faults, who are too conscientious to flatter us

as others do; or whose manifest superiority is a disadvantage to us?

Some there are even in this age who exhibit the coarsest vanity; who speak continually of themselves; who recount the things which they have done; and announce what they intend to do. These may almost literally be said to sound a trumpet before them as the Pharisees did. They certainly do not take care not to let their left hand know what their right hand doeth. But let us rather inquire whether *we* are not circuitously and indirectly seeking our own praise. Some endeavour to reflect honour on themselves by speaking highly of personages with whom they are intimate. Some, in short, seek a reputation for humility by the modest things which they say; some, the praise of candour, by the liberal things which they say; some, a name for kindness, by the soft things which they say; some, a character for judgment, by the prudent things which they say. The love of praise, it is to be feared, is the mainspring of common conversation; and they, who have never examined their hearts, are little aware how strong is this principle within them. It dictates to many men almost every thing which they either speak, or think, or do. The Pharisees therefore were not singular. They sought praise in one manner; we, in another: they by alms and ostentatious prayers; we, perhaps by our whole conversation and conduct. Let us be fearful of this principle; which is often the greatest foe to true virtue, though it is the chief prop of that virtue which is false

XX.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 5—8.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Religion in one view of it, is a secret thing. It consists in a secret converse between the invisible God and the soul. Our Saviour taught that it consisted not in the parading prayer of the Pharisees, in the magnificence of the worship of the temple, or in the vain repetitions of the heathen. Our pious reformers, in like manner, affirmed that it consisted not in the solemnities of the mass; in the grandeur of churches; or in the vain repetition of the Latin prayers of the papists. Again, religion at this day, consists not in the mere forms, however decent, of our established worship; in the regularity of our attendance at church; in the careful articulation of our responses; nor in any outward forms of religion. And I will add, that Christianity consists not in the mere extemporaneousness of prayer, nor in modes of worship peculiar to any dissenting congregation. Religion consists not in being frequent at public worship, and seldom engaged in secret prayer at home Christ warns us against such suppositions as this. "But thou," says He, "when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray unto thy Father

which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

The religion of many persons is merely outward. They do almost every thing, even in religion, to be seen of men They suit their religious conduct to the religious taste of the present time, just as the Pharisees accommodated their conduct to the more devout taste of the people of their day Secret prayer is the great test of a Christian. There is something in public prayer, as well as in social prayer, which may serve to amuse the mind, to gratify the ear, and to draw the attendance even of an irreligious person; but in secret prayer, when no eye is upon us, but that of GOD, we have a far better proof of the internal piety of the heart. "Verily," says our SAVIOUR, in reference to the Pharisees, they *have* their reward." As the Pharisee had his reward for the ostentatious prayers which he put up,—in the estimation which he obtained; so now, the decent attender on the public worship of GOD has some temporal recompense for his attendance. He is rewarded, if he be a servant, for the regularity of his church-going, by his master's approbation of this act of obedience. He is rewarded, if a master, by the respect and good opinion of his graver acquaintance; he is rewarded, if a father, by the more decent and dutiful behaviour of the children who accompany him to the place of his customary worship. Perhaps, he is also paid by the self-complacency which he feels in having performed, as he conceives, his religious duty; he is paid by the thought, that, because he has rendered to GOD the homage of his public prayers, he shall be received into heaven. "Verily," however, says our SAVIOUR, "they *have* their reward." Such persons have their reward in this world; they shall not have it in the world to come. They have their whole recompense now; there remains no further blessing for them from GOD in a future life. They were decent at public worship; and they have had the temporal advantages of this their decency. They meant to set an example to children and servants; and those

children and servants may have derived some benefit from the example. Their own souls they did not regard, as is evident from their neglect of secret prayer at home; and their own souls, therefore, shall receive no benefit on that day which shall determine the eternal state of the soul.

But it is time to turn from such characters to the serious Christian. He fulfils that precept of our SAVIOUR which we are considering. He "enters into his closet and shuts his door:" that is, he takes the best opportunity of being private, which is afforded to him; though he will rather pray in a low voice, in the presence of others, than not pray at all. He prays "unto his Father which is in secret;" that is, he pours out his heart in prayer, and he prays for every blessing which he needs for pardon of sin, for strength against temptation, for deliverance from his corruptions, for victory over the world, for direction in difficulties, for consolation under afflictions, for submission under pains and losses; for the increase, in short, of faith, of hope, and of charity; and for all the graces of God's Holy Spirit. And leading this life of fervent and secret prayer, that "GOD who seeth him in secret rewards him openly." He is rewarded by his obtaining evidently the very things which he asks. By the means of secret prayer put up in his closet, strength, to fulfil openly in the sight of men all the various duties of life, is imparted to him. He is raised above the power of those temptations by which the merely formal worshippers are overcome. You see this man conquer his passions, and sustain his trials, and suffer little (compared with the worldly man) under afflictions. You behold him upright and faithful to his GOD in all companies; daring to be religious in the midst of the profane world; and reproving that vice which the formal worshipper is too timid to contradict or to resist. He, who prays earnestly to GOD in secret, will generally be a decided character in public; and surely there is more comfort, as well as more respectability, in being thus consistent, than in being a saint with saints, and a worldly man with the worldly. In

this sense, then, we may probably interpret and apply the passage. That peculiar strength of character, which the world admires in some religious persons, may be referred to the efficacy of those secret prayers, of which the world takes no cognizance. They bow their knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and "He strengthens them with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Day by day they implore His grace; and, day by day, in answer to their prayers, He pours down upon them a portion of His own Spirit: and thus they are made strong to fulfil every task which is required of them; and to endure whatever trials may befal them: they are made happy in themselves, and often honourable in the sight of men; and thus they are rewarded openly.

XXI.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 9.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.

THE LORD'S prayer is often in the mouths of many by whom it is ill understood. We shall endeavour to afford a clear and just interpretation of it. We must, however, premise, that it was given by our SAVIOUR to His disciples, for the purpose, not only of explaining the general object and nature of prayer; but, also, of pointing out the manner in which they were to pray, in order to avoid those "vain" or useless "repetitions," and that "much speaking," which He had been blaming in the heathen.

The LORD'S prayer is, therefore, extremely short, much shorter than we know some prayers to have been, which were put up by our SAVIOUR himself. We doubtless ought to imitate the general matter of this prayer, rather than the length of it.

"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN:" we are thus taught to begin, by addressing GOD as "our Father." We all have earthly parents, to whom we are accustomed to look up. We know, that we have been depending on them; that we have received from them many good things; and that we owe them, in return, our reverence, affection, and submission. By means, therefore, of this relation to our earthly parents, an intimation is given us of the nature of our relation to GOD: which is a very easy and simple mode of being instructed in it, and the best, undoubtedly, of which we are capable. Have we fathers after the flesh? GOD also is our Father. To Him we owe all, and indeed more than all, that as children we ever owed to our natural parents. But GOD, also, is our Father which is in Heaven; our parents dwell with us on earth:—they are seen among us from day to day;—GOD is that parent who can be seen only by the eye of faith so long as we live in this world; for His dwelling place is in heaven. The first sentence in the LORD'S prayer implies, therefore, a profession of our faith in Him who is invisible; as well as an acknowledgment of our being related to Him, as a child is to its parent. Let us not attempt too much refinement in explaining the LORD'S prayer.

Nothing can be more simple, nothing more easy to understand, than this opening of it is. There is, however, a more peculiar sense in which some men are called in Scripture the children of GOD. Believers are said to be adopted into His family. We are all, says the Apostle, "the children of GOD by faith in CHRIST JESUS"*—"and if children, then heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST."† May we be enabled to put up this prayer in the spirit of adoption; and thus to add a further meaning to the more obvious one—may we do this, through the help of that SPIRIT, which, as the Scripture expresses it, enables us to say "Abba, Father."

* Gal. iii. 26 † Rom. viii 17

XXII.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 9.

Hallowed be thy Name.

THE *name of God*, means commonly in Scripture the same as GOD Himself: and "*hallowed*" means had in reverence, or honour. The expression "HALLOWED BE THY NAME" is, therefore, one by which we imply, that we consider all honour as due to GOD, and wish it to be rendered to Him. This disposition of the heart to ascribe praise and honour to GOD is a very sublime and excellent part of religion. It is that branch of prayer which is commonly called adoration. In thus adoring GOD, we, as it were, forget ourselves. We adore Him for what He is, essentially in Himself, and generally to all His creatures, rather than for what He is particularly to us. By addressing Him in this manner, our ideas of Him become exalted in the beginning of our prayer: and we, then, descend to our more particular petitions, with the greater reverence for Him, to whom we offer our supplications. We have an example of the spirit of adoration in that sublime language of the Psalmist, in which he calls upon all created things to unite with him in praising GOD. "Praise Him, all ye angels of his; praise Him, all his host; praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light; praise Him, all ye heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens:"* "Oh, praise God in his holiness, praise Him in the firmament of his power. Let every thing that hath breath, praise the LORD."†

* Ps. cxlviii. 2—4. † Ps. cl. 1, 2, 6.

XXIII.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 10.

Thy Kingdom come.

THE establishment of the religion of CHRIST in the world is represented in Scripture under the figure of the erection of a kingdom. The kings of the earth have their separate territories, over which they reign, and their several interests, which they endeavour to extend; and he is deemed the greatest and most successful monarch who is best able to maintain and enlarge his empire. GOD also has a kingdom in this world. It interferes not, however, with those of earthly princes; for it is a spiritual kingdom, consisting partly indeed of a visible church, but chiefly in an empire over the hearts of men. This Kingdom of God extends itself over many kingdoms of the world; for the subjects of the MESSIAH are of every nation, and tongue, and people, and language. For the more complete establishment of this Kingdom we are taught by CHRIST to pray, before we proceed to present our private petitions. The LORD'S prayer therefore supposes the success of the gospel is to be near our hearts. Let us who so often use these words, ask ourselves whether it be our ardent wish to see the gospel every where flourish? We long for the aggrandisement of our native country. We wish our rivals to be laid low, and our own land to become great and victorious. But do we bear in mind the far more important interests of the kingdom of CHRIST?

May the LORD take to Himself his great power and reign! may all kings fall down before Him, and all nations do Him service! may He go on, conquering, and to conquer, until all His enemies shall be laid under His feet!

XXIV

ST. MATTHEW VI. 10.

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

We know that God's will is perfectly fulfilled in heaven. The Angels stand ready to perform His pleasure: the Saints are made perfect in holiness: and, because the Divine will is thus accomplished, heaven is a place of perfect happiness. It is the wish and prayer of the Christian, that earth may in this respect resemble heaven: that men may cease from preferring their own pleasure to that of their Creator: and that, as angels are all ministering spirits, ready to fulfil whatever embassy the great Lord of all may assign to them; so men also may learn to do the will of God, by performing all those works of righteousness, which He hath commanded and appointed. The men of this world earnestly wish for their own happiness; and occasionally feel a desire to promote the general good: but they do not consider, that, so long as the will of God is not fulfilled, much happiness is not to be expected. From whence come almost all the pains and miseries which are experienced in our passage through life? come they not from the indisposition of man to do the will of God? May the time soon arrive when the earth shall resemble heaven in holiness: then will it also resemble heaven in happiness. Hasten the time, O Lord, when Thy kingdom shall come, and Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

XXV.

ST. MATTHEW VI. 11

Give us this day our daily bread.

Man is a creature so constituted, that daily food (or bread) is necessary for his continuance in life. This is the great law of his earthly condition. We are therefore taught in this prayer to pray daily to God for the supply of this our great and continually returning necessity. We are instructed to implore of our heavenly Father, that He will sustain these our perishable bodies, which would otherwise come day by day into new peril of death. We are taught to acknowledge, that, unless He, who created us, will also constantly preserve us, the life, which He has bestowed, would end; and vain would be all the help of man. Such is the obvious meaning of this brief request It implies moreover, that prayer is one of the appointed means of supplying our daily wants: and that the very food, which we earn by the sweat of our brow, is His gift. For is it not His sun, His wind, and His rain, which ripens every blade of corn which we eat? Is it not God, who gives health and strength to the reaper? and does not the same God bestow those bodily and mental powers, by which we earn whatever we exchange for our necessary food? Is it not He, who blesses all our daily industry, and causes our substance to increase?

But this petition must be understood in an extensive sense. Bread being the principal thing which we need, it stands for all other necessaries. Whatever the weakness and helplessness of man desires from his heavenly Father during his passage through this mortal life—whether of a temporal, or of a spiritual nature—is represented, in this short comprehensive prayer, by the term

Bread." Although, therefore, the words in the passage are few, the meaning is large. "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:"—It is to say, "Give us all things which Thou knowest to be needful to us. Supply, oh Lord, all our wants: we confess, that we cannot sustain ourselves; and that all our support is derived from Thee. We are helpless as to our bodies; and helpless as to our souls: and we, therefore, lift up our prayer to Thee, for whatsoever things we need. Give unto us this day bread to support our bodies; and give unto us this day grace to sustain our souls: for on Thee alone do we depend." Such is the meaning of the prayer; and exactly as our hearts tell us, that our wants are, so let our supplications also be They who think only of temporal blessings, will be likely to consider the prayer as referring only to these; but they, who feel their spiritual poverty, will also pray, while they utter these words, that their spiritual wants may be supplied.

XXVI.

ST. MATTHEW VI. 12.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

By the word "debts" is here evidently meant "trespasses" or sins; for the word "trespasses" is used in the same prayer, instead of "debts," in another part of Scripture. By our trespasses, we may be said to become debtors to GOD; for we incur a penalty proportioned to the sins which we commit. Now the debts, which we thus incur, we cannot pay. There is no hope that we shall ever pay them: for the future obedience of our

whole lives, even if it should be perfect, can never cancel the trespasses, which are past: just as the paying regularly all our future debts can never cancel a debt, which is already standing out against us. We are, therefore, taught in this prayer, to implore a free forgiveness; and we are in it likened to debtors who have nothing to pay; and who, therefore, can only ask a free discharge. We are enabled by other parts of Scripture to know on what ground it is that we obtain this pardon of our sins. That we ought to pray for pardon is all that we are here taught. The more particular doctrine of the manner of that pardon was to be divulged and explained when CHRIST should have paid the ransom of His death. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* Let us not be surprised that the doctrine of the Atonement is not here declared. The Atonement was to be made, before it was to be distinctly revealed. That the sins of men might be forgiven; and that the GOD of the Christian is a GOD rich in mercy, was information enough for this place: and it is information which should be unspeakably prized by every one, who knows that he is a sinner; who perceives, also, that his sins are so many debts due to GOD; and that he must be bound hand and foot, and cast into prison, having nothing to pay, unless GOD will freely forgive them all.

But it is also said, "Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" and in another place, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."† By means of these words we are required, in our very prayer, to profess that we are in the habit of forgiving freely the debts, or trespasses of our neighbours; a profession, indeed, which every Christian ought to be able confidently to make; appealing, as he makes it, to that GOD who searcheth and knoweth the heart.

Let us, then, take care, that, while we put up this prayer

* Col. i. 14. Ephes. i. 7. † St. Luke, xi. 4.

for pardon, we do it in the spirit of free forgiveness to all others. It is necessary to feel this temper, in order to our praying acceptably, that our own sins may be forgiven. God rejects, with abhorrence, the prayer of that man who is not forgiving towards his neighbours. If we are unrelenting to others, God will be unrelenting to us. We may gather from this test, whether our supplications shall be accepted. We need not ascend into Heaven, nor desire to have thence a special revelation to tell us, whether our prayers shall be heard, or not. If we draw near to God, in the spirit of the humble publican, smiting on our breasts, and saying, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner;" and if, at the same time, we feel, within us, a spirit of fervent charity towards all men, and of unreserved and free forgiveness towards those, in particular, who have in any way offended us, let us not doubt, that our heavenly Father hears the voice of our supplication, and will have compassion upon us. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

XXVII.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 13.

And lead us not into temptation.

The excellency of this part of the Lord's prayer will be best understood by those who are most acquainted with the weakness of man, and his liability to be overcome by temptation. We are very apt to be severe on others when they fall into sin; little thinking how likely to yield we ourselves should be, in case we should be thrown into the

same scene of trial. If some sin were to present itself to us in its most inviting form, and at some of those moments when we are the most unguarded; if an opportunity should be given us of committing it in perfect secrecy; if it should be that sin, more or less, to which, from our age, temperament, circumstances, and condition in life, we might be most in danger of yielding; who shall say that he should escape? "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION," ought surely then to be the language of all our hearts. The serious Christian feels, that the temptations, which are in life, constitute his great danger. He feels also, that it is safer to shun them; than to expose himself to them in the confidence of overcoming them. He wants to be safe landed in heaven; and, therefore, wishes only to pursue that course in life, which may make his passage to heaven the most easy, by lessening the occasions of his falling into sin. "LEAD ME NOT INTO TEMPTATION" will, therefore, be one earnest part of his prayer; and while he thus makes his supplication, that GOD, on whom he calls, will preserve him: GOD will give him grace to bear his smaller trials; and will break, in some way or other, the force of those fiercer temptations, which he may be too weak to endure. GOD will so order the events of His providence, as to protect and preserve him; for as the apostle observes, "GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

One other remark is proper in this place. If we pray, not to be led into temptation, we should also take care, not to lead ourselves into it. How inconsistent, in this respect, is the conduct of many persons, with that LORD'S prayer, which they perhaps daily use. They go to such places;—they read such books;—or they associate with such companions,—as serve to inflame their passions, and to put their virtue to more trials than it can bear. They suffer

* Cor x. 13.

themselves to be carried to the very edge of sin; they run boldly and heedlessly into those very scenes of temptation, from which they, with their lips, implore GOD to deliver them, every time they utter the LORD's prayer. Let us, then, pray to be kept from temptation; and let us also flee from it. In choosing our profession in life, our acquaintance, our connexions, let us make it a principal point in our consideration, what the comparative degree of temptation is likely to be. By thus proceeding cautiously, we shall proceed safely: and if we pray, at the same time, with our heart, to GOD that He will lead us not into temptation, we may hope that He will make all things work together for our good: and that, notwithstanding our extreme weakness, he will bring us safely through this dangerous and evil world, to His heavenly kingdom.

XXVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 13.

But deliver us from evil.

THE word *evil* as it stands in the original Greek may either be rendered *the evil one*, that is, the Devil; or that which is evil. We shall choose, for our present purpose, to consider it in the latter sense. First, then, what is it to be delivered from that which is evil? "Deliver us from evil" is a short expression; but, like some other expressions in the LORD's prayer, it has a large and comprehensive meaning. We have already shown that "give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer for the gift of all that variety of things, whether spiritual or temporal, which are truly good for us. "Deliver us from evil," is in like manner a prayer for deliverance from all that variety of things which

are truly evil. In explaining the word "evil," we may first observe, that a very good exemplification of the meaning of the term is furnished by the Litany of the Church of England. We are there taught to pray for deliverance, as well from temporal evils, "from lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence and famine, from battle and murder, and from sudden (or violent) death." As, also, from the spiritual evils of blindness of heart; and pride, vain glory, and hypocrisy, from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness; from fornication and all other deadly sin; and from all deceits of the world, the flesh, and the Devil: and, further, from all false doctrine, heresy and schism, from hardness of heart, and contempt of GOD's word and commandment: and in short from the grand evil of sin, from the crafts and assaults of the Devil, from GOD's wrath, and from everlasting damnation. It would be easy to enlarge very widely on this subject; for we live in a world where we are exposed to ten thousand different evils. Dangers threaten us, both at home, and abroad; both by night and by day; both in solitude, and in company; at every age, under every circumstance, and in every situation. There is no place on earth to which we can retreat, and say, that there we shall be secure from evil. What various pains and diseases are there, which attack the body; and how many of these, which affect also the mind? There is the loss of reason; there are pangs and torments of various kinds to be dreaded by us; and there are a thousand accidents which may put an end to our comfort, or destroy our lives, even in a moment. Besides which, how constantly are we exposed to every kind of spiritual evil:—especially to our great adversary the Devil, who "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Let it only be remarked, further, that we are in unceasing peril from the corruption of our own evil nature; for we are ourselves often our own worst enemies. We are in peril from our unruly and tormenting passions, which both injure the body; and, also war against the soul. It is in vain, therefore, to count the

evils which threaten the sons of men. Man, in passing through the world, may be compared to a traveller in a wilderness, in which all manner of noxious and destroying animals abound; and to a traveller, moreover, who is totally unarmed for his defence. What, then, can be more proper, than that one in such circumstances should, day by day, lift up his prayer to GOD, and say, "Oh LORD, deliver me from evil."

Let us, then, each ask ourselves, first, whether we are aware of all these evils? whether we feel any lively sense of the peril, in which we continually stand; whether, especially, we know any thing of the evil of sin, and of our own danger from it? and, secondly, let us ask ourselves, whether we are sensible, that GOD alone can save and deliver us? It seems to be a great object of the LORD'S prayer to inculcate upon us our weakness and sinfulness and danger, on the one hand; and our dependence on GOD for grace and strength, on the other. To this end it is, that we are taught to call daily on GOD for all things which we need; for the possession of all things which are desirable; and for deliverance from all things which are hurtful GOD is stronger than our enemies: He can, and He will, deliver as many as pray to Him for deliverance; but He will leave those, to the power of their adversaries, who seek not their help from Him. Let us, then, daily implore His aid. Let us not go forth from our chamber in the morning, without first asking His protection and blessing.

Let us fall down on our knees every morning; and say, "Oh LORD, deliver me this day from evil."

XXIX.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 13.

For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Our Lord closes that prayer which he teaches to His disciples, by thus ascribing dominion and power and glory to God. To praise and magnify God, is no unimportant part both of public and of private worship. Why is it, indeed, that we pray to God? It is because He is able to fulfil the requests which we make unto Him. There is therefore, a connection between that part of our prayer, in which we supplicate, and that part in which we adore God, and acknowledge His divine perfection. It is the acknowledgment of God's greatness, which suggests to us our own littleness. It is the belief of His power, which encourages us to plead our own weakness; and it is the view of His exceeding glory, which disposes us to self-abasement and humility.

But let us proceed, more particularly, to explain the expressions which close the prayer taught us by our Lord. "Thine is the kingdom." God is the true and rightful sovereign of this lower world: the various powers and author ties, which exist in it, are all derived from God:—for all power is of God;—and he who resisteth the power "resisteth the ordinance of God." Kings are subject to God. They are accountable to Him for all their actions though we should suppose them accountable to no one else As all the inferior authorities of the kingdoms of this world are derived from the supreme authority of kings; their authority is derived from God, and centres in His authority. His, therefore, is the kingdom. He is the true king over all; and earthly kings are but the subjects of this one great eternal King, "who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

But GOD also is the true and rightful sovereign of the whole universe The angels, principalities, and powers, which are in heaven, are subject to Him. Their power is entirely subject to His power; and their authority, to His authority.

CHRIST, indeed, is also declared in Scripture to be our Lord and King. He is the "King of Zion." "Behold I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."* "All kings," it is also said, "shall be made subject unto Him; for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." Nevertheless, we are taught to expect that a time shall come, when the mediatorial throne shall be removed away; and that the Son Himself, when all things shall have been subdued unto Him, shall himself also be subject to the Father, "that God may be all in all."†

Again, THINE ALSO IS THE POWER. As we have shown that there is no true dominion but that of GOD; so, also, there is no true power but that of GOD. All the power of men and of angels is as nothing before Him; such power as they have, He gives them; theirs is only an inferior and delegated power: they have no power of their own. Kings, indeed, may boast of their power. They may send forth their armies into the field: they may command; and the thing commanded shall be done: but it is done, only so far, as GOD permits it to be done. It is the power of GOD which sustains all the inferior powers in the universe; and when He pleases, all the strength of his creatures utterly fails. It is He who setteth up kings at His pleasure. It is He also, who putteth them down. "He lifteth up the poor man out of the mire, that he may set him among the princes, even among the princes of the people:" for all power is of GOD: and there is not a thing which any individual does, but GOD gives him the power to do it. His, is the power; and His, therefore, we should, in our prayer, acknowledge it to be.

* Psalm. ii. 6. † 1 Cor. xv. 28.

Again, lastly, THINE IS THE GLORY. If indeed, His be the kingdom, and His the power, it follows that His also ought to be the glory. There can be no true glory but that of GOD. All the beings who are in heaven, and all the creatures which are on earth, all the things which exist, whether animate or inanimate, in all the regions of infinite space, were created by GOD. To GOD, therefore, belongs the glory of what they are, and of all that they do: for on Him do they depend; and His was the glory of creating them.

Let us now consider, whether there be any thing which we have, of which we have a right to glory. Shall we glory in our wisdom? But who gave us that wisdom? Was it not GOD, who put into our minds whatever powers of understanding we possess; and not we ourselves, who placed them there? We have no more right, therefore, to glory in any natural faculties of the mind, than we should have to glory in having ourselves put the sun into the firmament. All our exercise, also, of these natural faculties, is through the power of GOD enabling us to exercise them. Again, all virtue and goodness are from GOD: they are, indeed, the immediate effect of His grace working in us. "What hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"* We see then, that all glory belongs to GOD. His is the glory. The expression "THINE IS THE GLORY" implies, then, that we renounce the glory: that we pretend not to it: that we ascribe it all to Him. May we, indeed, thus reject it:—may our ideas of GOD be such as to raise Him in our eyes: and to make us sink in our own esteem. May we exalt Him; and annihilate ourselves: and in this spirit of self-annihilation, may we address our prayers unto Him.

The term "FOR EVER" signifies, that the kingdom and power and glory not only belong to GOD *now;* but shall

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

belong to him *for ever and ever.* Thy kingdom, says the Prophet, is an everlasting kingdom; and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations :* or, as our own Church expresses it; "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

The word AMEN, which closes the prayer, signifies "so be it." It is a fresh affirmation of what had before been said. It is like declaring the same thing a second time, for the sake of confirmation.

We have now gone through our explanation of the LORD'S Prayer. Let us learn in future, when we use this prayer, to say it, not with our lips only. Let us beware, lest we fall into that very sin of the heathen, against which our SAVIOUR meant, by this prayer, to provide—the sin of using vain repetitions as the heathen did. This prayer itself is turned, as we fear, into a mere vain repetition, by thousands; for they repeat it over and over, without sense or meaning. Let us turn it to the chief uses for which it was intended. Let us take a lesson from it, as to the manner in which we are to shape our prayers in general. Let us learn from it to avoid all mere service of the lips, and multiplication of words, which are without meaning: and, whenever we use this prayer itself, let us bear in mind the interpretation which has now been given of every sentence of it: and thus let us learn to "pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also."†

* Psalm, cxlv. 13 † 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

XXX.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 14, 15.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

CHRIST, in his sermon on the mount, had already instructed His disciples in the duty of showing mercy, and of even loving their enemies, "Blessed" He had said "are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."* And "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."† And in the LORD'S prayer, He had taught His disciples to say "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."‡

The forgiveness of injuries is, as we before remarked, one of the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity. We also before observed, that, this doctrine having been most plainly taught by CHRIST, there is no one now bearing the Christian name who refuses to give his assent to it: though, undoubtedly, there are multitudes who contrive, in one way or another, to evade it in their practice.

We will here speak, more particularly than we have yet done, if those occasions on which an unforgiving spirit is now apt to show itself; as well as of those modifications and disguises by which it is in this age apt to be concealed.

The occasions, on which different men are apt to take offence, are indeed very different. It may however be observed, in general, that, whenever the pride of men is wounded, they are then wounded in the most tender part, and that hey cannot so easily forgive an affront to their pride, as

* St Matt v. 7. † St Matt. v. 44. ‡ St. Matt. vi. 12

they can an injury to their interest. Let us then not fancy that we are of a forgiving spirit, because we can forgive those who have committed a trespass upon our property; because we can pardon the thief, or the house-breaker, who has robbed us, and whose injury moreover we know that the law of the land will amply revenge. Let us examine, rather, whether we forgive those who, by some act or other, have offered an affront to the natural pride of our hearts; and who, in this far more trying way, have been guilty of some "trespass against us." Again, it is worthy of remark, that it is by no means the greatest and most notorious injuries, which are apt to give the greatest offence. On great occasions, we know that the world observes us; and by forgiving a notable injury, we think that we shall do ourselves credit with the world. Moreover we usually find that where the injury is great, many sympathize with us, and join together in blaming the guilty persons.

This general defamation of the man who has offended us, serves, much like the execution of the severe sentence of law, to satisfy our anger, and to quiet an unforgiving spirit. Let us not then take credit for forgiving our enemies, merely because we forgive them in cases of this sort. Let us inquire rather, whether we forgive him who injures us, when he does it in such a manner that the world takes part with him rather than with us: and when the offender seems to suffer no punishment, or inconvenience of any kind, for his offence. If we can forgive freely in cases of this kind, it is a strong mark of our having attained to a truly forgiving spirit. It is true, undoubtedly, that provocations will sometimes be given which are so very great that it is hard indeed, especially for men of certain natural tempers, not to be much ruffled by them. But it is one thing, to be agitated, and even angry, for a moment; it is another, to bear settled malice in the heart. Let us dread, above all things, to retain a secret ill-will against any one. Let us be able to say, "There is no man on earth whom

I account my enemy: I live in charity with all mankind."

Let us therefore inquire, not only whether we forgive those who trespass against us; but in what sort of humour we are with them. Is it a benevolent and kind humour, an unreserved and friendly humour, a communicative and pleasant humour? or are we reserved towards them, silent, distant, and desirous of avoiding them? Do we rejoice with them when they rejoice; and weep with them when they have any thing to make them weep; in the same manner as we did, before they trespassed against us? If the trespass be thoroughly forgiven, undoubtedly this will be very much the case: but if quite the contrary to this happen; if we feel secretly grieved at their cheerfulness and prosperity, and glad at their adversity; this is a strong mark of our not feeling towards them in a forgiving spirit: for forgiveness, be it remembered, does not consist *in saying "I forgive."* It consists in the general temper and spirit. It consists in the perseverance of kindness after the offence. How is this as to GOD? We pray to be forgiven by Him, *in the same manner as we forgive others;* but when we pray for his forgiveness, do we not mean by it, that we pray for a kind and beneficent and friendly disposition in GOD towards us? Should we consider Him as forgiving us our trespasses, if we knew Him to be still difficult of approach, cold and distant towards us, not allowing us to draw near to Him, in prayer, as His children; but wishing us to depart from His presence, instead of inviting us towards Him?

Let us then examine ourselves closely, respecting the nature of that forgiveness which we exercise; for in the same *manner* in which we forgive men their trespasses, our Heavenly Father will also forgive us. Oh, how great is the contrast between that forgiveness to which we lay claim, from GOD towards us; and our temper towards others; God, we expect, will forgive us great offences, offences many times repeated, and will forgive them freely

liberally, and from the heart. But we are offended at our neighbour, perhaps, for the merest trifles; and for an injury only once offered: and we are but half reconciled, when we seem to forgive. Even an uncertain rumour, an ambiguous word, or a suspected look will inflame our anger; and hardly any persuasion will induce us for a long time to relent: by one, offence is taken by a neglect at not answering a letter; by another, at not returning a visit; by a third, at some accidental failure in those attentions which it is chiefly the pride and littleness of our own minds that has taught us to expect. We are embittered perhaps, not against enemies, but against our very friends, by some of these causes; and we find it hard, and almost impossible, to forgive.

How different is this treatment of others, who have trespassed against us, from that treatment which we expect at the hand of GOD! In order, then, to cure this temper, let us call often to mind our own trespasses against *Him*. Let us earnestly implore of Him pardon for our great offences; and while we thus pray, let us abhor the thought of retaining the slightest feeling of an unforgiving spirit towards our neighbour.

XXXI.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 16—18.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

The Pharisees, who were hypocrites, fasted often; and they took great care to *appear* to fast; for an appearance of much praying and fasting was one path to reputation in those days. They had little regard, however, to that God who seeth in secret; and did not reflect how much better it is to practise some of that self-denial which is known only to Him; than to be full of sanctimonious pride, and to be had in respect and reverence, on account of their great austerities, by all the people.

It may be asked, whether fasting be a duty now required of a Christian? Our answer is, that Christ in this place, seems to approve, rather than to forbid it. It had, indeed, been on some occasions required of the Jews: and the Pharisees were much accustomed to it. This being the case, it looks as if our Saviour chose rather to assume the practice to exist, and to direct the manner in which men should fast; than directly to prescribe any thing to His disciples, respecting the frequency, or the strict obligation, of the duty. And it seems in like manner proper now that ministers should rather insist on the principle, which ought to govern Christians in respect to circumstances of this sort, than attempt to define very closely what should be the exact conduct of individuals. There are occasions on which the nation is called upon to fast; and to confess the national sins: and a Christian need hardly be told, that

his serious observance of such seasons is a part of his Christian duty. There may undoubtedly be occasions, for individuals also, to set apart particular seasons for their own personal humiliation, and repentance of their particular sins. How far a literal fast ought in either of these cases to be carried, it is not, perhaps, easy to determine. But the precept here given ought, as we think, chiefly to be considered by us as a general precept respecting self-denial

That general self-denial is a Christian duty, is proved by many sayings of CHRIST, and by abundant passages of the New Testament. "If any man will come after me," (that is, will be my disciple,) "let him deny himself," said our SAVIOUR.* "I keep under my body," said St. Paul, "and bring it under subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."† And again, "all things are lawful unto me," said St. Paul, "but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any."‡ There is an habitual power over the body, to which it seems to have been the plan of St. Paul to attain; and at which also all Christians should aim, by such means as they may find by their own experience to be most conducive to this end: and, in general, it is not so much fasting (which perhaps is but a means) as the attainment of the end, which we ought to regard. Whoever has not attained this end,—whoever, we mean, has not brought his body under any subjection, is at the mercy of a thousand temptations. It must then be the Christian's ambition to become, in this sense, independent. It should be his holy resolution, in the strength of that SAVIOUR, to whom he continually looks up, to habituate himself to such degree of bodily mortification, and self-denial, as may best fit him for every part of his heavenly Master's service. This, however, he will not do by Popish or Pharisaical austerities; nor by severities practised for mere severity's sake, nor by prescribing to himself any plan of self-denial, which is so severe as

* St. Matt. xvi. 24. † 1 Cor. ix. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 12.

only to increase upon the whole his temptations, instead of abating them; nor by ostentatious display of his acts of self-denial; nor by such severities as are meant to produce only self-complacent recollection; but he must endeavour to gain his end, by suiting both the nature and the degree of his self-denial to the object which he has in view; namely, the object of enabling himself better to resist his temptations; and better to serve GOD, in that situation and condition of life to which GOD's providence has already called him.

In order, however, to obtain this object, there will be large occasion for acts of self-denial. Those acts, however, should be secret. There is many a secret rule, which we should prescribe to ourselves as good for our own particular case, which it is better, perhaps, not even to avow to others. If our chief alms (as was before said) should be in secret, much more so should be our chief self-denial. There may be many occasions for self-denial which are known to ourselves only; and if we duly practise the secret duty, that GOD who seeth us in secret shall reward us openly. The fair character, which many a Christian has in the sight of men for morality, for self-command, for proper temperance in all things, is the result, perhaps, much more of those secret struggles in which he has been exercised, than is commonly imagined.

"But thou, when thou fastest," adds our SAVIOUR, "anoint thine head, and wash thy face:"* that is, put not on the appearance of a man of great self-denial before the world. Be easy, be cheerful, like other men. Let your private chamber, and let your conscience witness your struggles with yourself—but talk not of them—beware of giving a Pharisaical air to your character. "Be not," it is said, "as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces."† This, as applied to our days, may be construed to mean, that we ought not to endeavour to inspire an idea of our sanctity by means of any thing solemn and

* St. Matt. vi. 17. † St. Matt vi. 16.

melancholy in our look, or any thing in our dress which is unbecoming and very particular. "Anoint thine head, and wash thy face."* In respect to dress and appearance, be much like other people; make not your religion to consist in any disagreeable particularities of this sort. Much finery and extravagance of dress are undoubtedly forbidden in Scripture, by that passage which says, Let your adorning "not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel."† But a moderate conformity to the world, in things indifferent, seems, to be authorized by the spirit of this passage; *anoint thine head.*

How amiable in all these respects is Christianity! It requires of us nothing which ought to make us in any respect disagreeable to any one; and it consists in practice, much more than in profession. While the man of the world pretends, in every respect, to much more than he practises, the Christian practises much more than he professes. In secret, he exercises himself in much self-denial; while in all his outward garb he conforms himself to the innocent customs of the world; yet without being carried into any fashionable extravagance. He is neat and decent, and in nowise particular in his apparel. He is pure in heart; but not solemn and sanctimonious in look. He is very strict with himself in secret, having many a private law of self-denial and mortification, which he prescribes to himself; but these escape the observation of the public.

May this be our character! May we please that God who seeth in secret; and may He, who seeth us in secret, reward us openly!

* St. Matt. vi. 17. † 1 Peter iii. 3

XXXII.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 19—21.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

THERE are, perhaps, few errors more common or more mischievous, than that of supposing that Christianity was intended only to be a cure for the greater vices and immoralities of men; and that a decent, orderly, and, at the same time, worldly way of life is consistent with it. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST came down from heaven, in order to set before men the hope of everlasting life; and to call away their thoughts, affections, and desires from earthly things, to those things which are heavenly. "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth,"* is one chief precept of the gospel. The bulk of mankind are pursuing eagerly the things of this life; and the acquisition of money, in particular, is the object which is nearest the hearts of most men. It has been thus from the beginning:—in the days of the prophets, men are spoken of, as adding "house to house," and "field to field."† In the days of our SAVIOUR, they are warned against "pulling down their barns, in order to build larger;" and against saying to themselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."‡ And in these days, how does the same spirit prevail:—most men both act and talk as if the only end, for which they were sent into the world, were that of increasing their worldly possessions; how they may best improve the property which they have in land; how they may make an advantageous

* Colossians iii 2. † Isa. v. 8. ‡ St. Luke xii. 19.

purchase in the stocks; or how they may turn to their benefit a speculation in trade. These are the points on which men discourse with the most anxiety; and on which they most of all set their hearts. For the love of wealth they are willing to toil and labour; "to rise early, and late take rest, and to eat the bread of carefulness."* They are worn with anxiety respecting these their worldly affairs. They seem to long but for one thing in life; and that is, to get a good fortune for themselves; and, then, they hope to leave a good sum to each of their children, when they die. But "lay not up for yourselves," says CHRIST, "treasures upon earth: where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."† Oh, if men were but as eager with respect to the next world, as they are in respect to this, what a rich inheritance might they obtain! But they labour merely for the perishing riches:—they lay up that "wealth which moth and rust can corrupt, and which thieves can break through and steal." They please themselves, indeed, with the good security for their money, which they obtain; they embark their property, as they think, in none but safe and prudent speculations; they invest it in solid land, or in the safest sort of stocks; and little reflect, to how many accidents all earthly possessions are exposed.

These are the times‡ which have remarkably shown to us the great uncertainty of riches: for how many have been lately wandering over the earth, every where begging their bread, or earning it by the hardest labour, who once lived in affluence in their own land, and thought that they had safe, as well as large, possessions; but their riches have made to themselves wings and flown away; the moth and rust have corrupted them, and the thieves have broken through, and stolen them.

*Ps. cxxvii. 2. † St. Matt. vi. 19, 20.

‡ Written during the French Revolution; after the emigration of thousands, nobles and priests, from their own country to England.

How many, indeed, of every country fall into sudden and unexpected poverty:—some one breaks, who was in their debt; some article, in which their chief property had consisted, sinks remarkably in value; some trading speculation proves unfortunate; some crop from their land fails, through the badness of the season; or some one either robs, or cheats them; and, thus, their hoard is taken from them. If the heart be fixed on money, how is a man pained and grieved in all cases of this sort.

But if, on the contrary, we have only laboured to get a competency for ourselves, and our families, according to the will of GOD; not so much caring about the wealth itself, as about the fulfilment of our own duty by the performance of what belongs to our stations; and if, in the midst of our labour we have calmly left it to Providence to send poverty, or riches, as He pleases;—if, amidst all our worldly business, our hearts have habitually been in Heaven; if we have often thought of Heaven, talked of Heaven, and prayed to have our chief inheritance in Heaven; if it have been the end of all our actions in this life to provide ourselves "bags which wax not old, a treasure in the Heavens that faileth not;"* if to grow in grace, to be rich in faith, and to abound in every good work, have been accounted by us the great ends of living; and if we have thus learnt to feel a holy disdain of all merely temporal riches; then, and then only, may we consider ourselves as having fulfilled the precept given us in this passage:—then may we be said to have laid up our happiness in a place where it shall not be liable to earthly accidents; "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"† and where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.

The heart of every man accompanies his treasure; for that is a man's treasure which his heart runs after the most Would we therefore know where our chief treasure lies?—we have only to inquire where our chief affections are

* St. Luke xii. 33. † St. Mark vi. 20

placed. Are they set on Heaven, or on earth?—on things above, or on something here below? This consideration is indeed a very awful one: for it implies, that they, whose affections and desires do not point towards Heaven, have certainly no treasure there. They, who take no thought about Heaven, have no inheritance in that better world. Their whole treasure is on earth, where their heart so plainly is. May we try ourselves continually by this test: for CHRIST hath given it to us for this purpose. May we consider seriously how much this saying of CHRIST imports: it is, as if we had heard Him saying,—Tell me where your heart is, and there you shall find your treasure:—tell me where your treasure is, and there assuredly will be your heart.

XXXIII.

ST. MATTHEW, V. 22, 23.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:
But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness; if therefore the light, that is in thee, be darkness, how great is that darkness!

OUR SAVIOUR here instructs us, by means of one of our bodily senses, in a very great and fundamental religious truth. He says—"The light of the body is the eye; and, if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:" that is, the body is directed by the light which is in the eye: and, if the eye be perfectly sound, and see right, then the whole body will have the benefit of its light. But "if the eye be evil," if the member which directs the body be disordered; then, "the whole body shall be full of darkness; and if the light, that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

Let us now apply this, as our SAVIOUR undoubtedly meant it should be applied, to the case of man in respect to his spiritual condition. There is a certain spiritual faculty, which is, to the whole moral man, much what the faculty of the eye is to the whole body. We mean, that there is a certain power of perceiving and distinguishing what is morally right and morally wrong, and what is morally true and morally false, without which our moral conduct cannot be made right. If a man be used to "call evil, good; and good, evil;" "to put darkness for light, and light for darkness;"* if he be blind to all moral excellency; if he have no taste for spiritual things; if truth and uprightness, if purity and holiness, if religion and godliness have no beauty in his eyes, it is in vain to talk of his moral conduct being made right. It is true, there may be an external morality; there may be certain acts done, which, in themselves, are moral and right; and which may pass for virtues, in the eyes of men: but they are no virtues in the sight of GOD, who considers the moral quality of the act, as determined by the moral state of the mind and heart.

In order, therefore, to do any one action aright, the heart, in the first place, must be turned to the love of true holiness. The eyes of the understanding must be enlightened; the reason, which is in man, must be sanctified; the natural blindness, and prejudice against religious truth must be removed; the faculty of discerning spiritual things must be acquired; otherwise, the man, in spite of all his boasted reason, will only grope in darkness in respect to spiritual things. He may do by chance, it is true, some things which in themselves are right; since even a blind man may chance to walk for a while in the right path: but, in general, he will take the wrong course; though ignorant that he does so; and it is not his own eyesight, which will lead him in any one instance aright: his whole body is full of darkness.

* Isaiah, v. 20.

A few remarks shall now be made on the subject, which will serve further to illustrate it.

And, first, we may learn from hence the reason why so many neglect or reject the Gospel of CHRIST; and among them not a few who possess much human wisdom and learning. They want that spiritual light in the mind, of which our SAVIOUR here speaks. They choose to themselves some principle of morals, or some system of what they may call religion, less holy than the principle and system of the Gospel, and which better suits the unholiness of their hearts. "Light is come into the world," said our SAVIOUR, "and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* All indisposition to receive either the Gospel in general, or its peculiar doctrines, is resolved in Scripture into blindness, and hardness of heart, and want of spiritual discernment. For, "the natural man," says St. Paul, "receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT of GOD: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."† And, again, "But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them."‡ So, also, it is said by St. John, of him who wants the particular grace of charity, or love, that "he walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth."§

Again, secondly, let us cease to wonder that there is so much self-confidence, self-righteousness, and self-complacency, as there is in men; and as there is in those men in particular, who are more than commonly depraved. The light that is in them is darkness:—the faculty of discerning spiritual and moral truth is corrupted and diseased. Hence multitudes are continually doing evil, who think that they are

* St. John, iii. 19. † 1 Cor. ii. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4.
§ 1 St. John. ii. 11.

doing good. They dress themselves out in certain fancied virtues, which, in the sight of GOD, are sins. But woe be unto them, the prophet seems to say, "who compass themselves with sparks of their own kindling."* Woe be to those who create to themselves virtues which GOD never made to be such; and then trust to their performance of these for their acceptance with Him. It has often been remarked, by some of the most accurate observers of mankind, that the persons, who trust most to their own good works for salvation, are commonly those who have the least of these to trust to. And this is a paradox, to the solution of which we ought carefully to attend. The solution is easy, if we do but take into consideration the saying of CHRIST of which we are now treating. The light, which is in these persons, is darkness; and all the virtues, in which they trust, are false virtues. How gross, indeed, is the self-deceit of man in this respect! For if the light which should be in them, "be darkness, now great is that darkness!"† Who is there, for instance, however distinguished by the profligacy of his life, who has not some sort of morality, or virtue, or religion, or honour, some substitute for true goodness, of which he boasts? This false and spurious goodness is made the theme of the wicked man's conversation. It is the sort of goodness, which he tells you that he approves in others, and that he is not defective in practising himself. This false goodness becomes the rival and competitor of the true: and, being thus preferred from a predilection for it, which is not insincere and being also thus practised, (for it is most easy to be practised,) it commonly also is considered as meritorious in its nature; and is trusted to, as the ground of salvation. That man, on the other hand, whose eyes it has pleased God to open, so that he sees clearly into the nature of real holiness, is sure to see also, how exceedingly defective in it he is:—he is glad to accept of an interest in his SAVIOUR'S

* See Isa. l. 11. † St. Matt vi. 23.

sacrifice: being, on account of his ten thousand deficiencies, humbled to the very dust before his God.

Again, thirdly, let us beware of the error of those who think, that it is only necessary for a man to act according to his conscience, in order to make sure that his conduct shall be right. It ought, first, to be inquired, whether it be an enlightened conscience which he follows. For there certainly is such a thing as a blinded conscience; and, also, a sleepy conscience, a corrupted conscience, a hardened conscience, a "conscience seared as with a hot iron."* There have been those who have even thought, that in killing the best servants of God, they did God service.† More than half, perhaps, of the common sins of men, are committed by them without the least violence to conscience: and, for this reason,—the "light that is in them is darkness." If the mind and conscience are truly enlightened, so as to discern religious truth, and error, and good, and evil; and so as to know the whole nature and extent of religious and moral duty; then, indeed, to follow conscience is to follow a single or clear-sighted eye; and the eye being "single," the general conduct will be right:—the whole body will be full of light. But if the "eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness;" and if "the light, that is in thee, be darkness, how great is that darkness."‡ Let us then dread an ignorant and blinded conscience: it is the source of ten thousand sins, of which we are not at all aware. Let us dread it as we would a diseased eye, which, if it see at all, yet sees falsely.

But how, it will be said, are we to obtain this spiritual faculty which has been so much spoken of? Our answer is, that it is to be obtained by prayer, and also by the use of all those means which God hath appointed for the attainment of it. The Holy Spirit is the author of all spiritual light; and our Saviour hath assured us, that God will "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."§ Would

* 1 Tim. iv. 2. † St. John, xvi. 2. ‡ St. Matt. vi. 23.
§ St. Luke, xi. 13.

we know the first principles of our religion, would we be instructed aright respecting GOD THE FATHER, and his Son JESUS CHRIST;—the same GOD, who said in the beginning, "Let there be light, and there was light;"*—the same GOD, who then "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," must shine into our hearts, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."† David prayed thus for the divine illumination: "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."‡ Saint Paul prayed for his converts thus: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."§

Let *us* pray to GOD for the same gift: let us pray also, that we may "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."‖

To prayer, however, we must add other means. We must take all measures for detecting in ourselves every religious error: we must avoid prejudice; we must inquire, examine, reflect, observe. We must read the Scriptures with great attention: we must make honest use of the little light which we have: "for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not" (that is, makes no use of what he hath) "from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."¶

But it may, also, be asked, How are we to know whether we have the spiritual faculty or not? We answer, "to the law, and to the testimony,"** examine what the Scripture testifies on this subject. A taste for the Scriptures is, indeed, of itself, a sign of our possessing some degree of this spiritual light: we mean, provided it be a taste for the entire and unadulterated word of GOD, and not for a few favourite or perverted parts of it.

We will only add the following caution. Some are apt

* Gen. i. 3. † 2 Cor. iv. 6. ‡ Ps. cxix. 18.
§ Eph. i. 18. ‖ Col i.. 9. ¶ St. Luke viii. 18
** Isaiah viii. 20

to think that spiritual light has respect chiefly either to the mysteries, or to what are now commonly called the doctrines of the Gospel, which is certainly a great mistake. Spiritual light is continually spoken of in Scripture as having a reference also to every part of a man's practical conduct. Thus, Saint Peter, after speaking of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, observes, in respect to them all, "that he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."* And Saint John also observes, that he that "hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."† As the eye instructs the body how to move, and enables each limb to act its proper part; so the spiritual faculty of the mind, when in its full vigour and perfection, directs every action of the life: it helps us to perceive our various duties, instructs us what to aim at, and what to avoid: it enables us to know what tempers are good, and what are evil; what thoughts, what words, what actions. It informs us not in doctrines only, or in the mysteries of our faith, but in every branch and ramification of our various duties, whether to God or man. For if "THINE EYE BE SINGLE, THY WHOLE BODY SHALL BE FULL OF LIGHT."‡

XXXIV.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 24.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

THIS is a most important and fundamental maxim of true religion. "No man can serve two masters:" that is, two opposite masters. The word "Mammon" signifies riches

* 2 St. Pet. i. 9. † 1 St John ii. 9 ‡ St Matt. vi. 22.

or the god of riches. It may stand, however, for any other idol, which men may be disposed to worship. This saying of CHRIST, therefore, if taken in the narrow sense, means, ye cannot be servants to GOD, and, at the same time, servants (or slaves) to the love of money: or, if taken in the largest sense, ye cannot be servants to GOD, and at the same time servants (or slaves) to any other master—either to riches, or to honour, or to pleasure; either to the world, to the flesh, or to the Devil. In whichsoever of these senses we interpret the term, "Mammon;" GOD and Mammon are opposite masters; and they command opposite duties. That which the one directs us to hate, the other instructs us to love; and that which the one requires us to do, the other commands us to leave undone. Allegiance to the one is rebellion against the other. It is impossible to unite the two services; and it is hypocrisy, as well as folly, to attempt to do it. Choose, therefore, which ye will serve: ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

In enlarging on this passage, it may be observed, that fidelity to GOD is here implied to be a leading principle of true religion. GOD is held up to us, under the character of a master; and man, in that of a servant. GOD, indeed, may also be considered as represented in this place in the light of a lord or king; and man, in that of a subject. To be a Christian, therefore, is to be a faithful servant of our heavenly Master, and to be a loyal subject of the King of kings. It is, to take Him, and Him only, for our Lord. It is, to refuse obedience to His competitors and His adversaries. It is, to obey the laws of GOD, and not any opposite laws. It is, to bow to His authority, and not to any rival authority. It is, to love GOD, to fear GOD, to delight in GOD: and *comparatively* speaking, neither to love, nor fear, nor delight in any other object. It is, to hate and despise all other objects, when considered as competitors with GOD.

Many, who profess in general to be servants of GOD, are far from being thus faithful to Him. They are like servants having two masters; or like subjects pretending

allegiance to two kings, who are rivals of each other. They obey GOD, as they think; but they obey Mammon also. They endeavour to unite the two services:—they wish to be in favour with GOD, and in favour also with men; to gain the riches of this life, and likewise a treasure in heaven; to possess the honour of the world, as well as eternal glory.

Let us now speak particularly of those who serve Mammon in the most literal sense; and in treating of these, we shall describe a large part of mankind. Most men, in entering upon their profession, especially if it be that of trade, propose to make their fortunes, as they call it "What," say they, "is the use of following business, if we are not to gain money by it? We will labour to be rich, and even to be very rich; but we will use honest means, and take due care to fulfil, at the same time, all our religious and moral duties."

Such persons mistake the nature of true religion. They understand not, that it consists in mortifying those earthly desires which naturally govern the heart, in order that by so mortifying them, GOD may reign without a rival there. They perceive not, that indifference to wealth, and a disposition to labour for the sake of duty, and not of covetousness, are some of the chief marks of true religion. They, moreover, mistake in supposing, that any man, influenced by a strong love of wealth, can carry on his business with perfect fairness.

The desire of money blinds the eyes, and betrays into frauds which are unperceived. Would you be strictly honest—would you avoid the crooked conduct common in your profession—begin with determining that it shall be your chief object to please GOD, and not to obtain money: for be assured, that a man cannot be true to his gain, and true to his GOD also. You cannot serve both these masters; either you must hate the one, and love the other; or hold to the one, and despise the other: you cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

But wealth is by no means the only rival of God in the heart. Wealth is even despised by some men of the world. The object of their supreme desire is perhaps a proud pre eminence in their profession, or at least a very honourable station in it. In comparison of this, the favour of God is little thought of or regarded. With others, to rise in the general scale of society is the one object of ambition. Old persons aim to gratify the same dispositions with the young, by preferring, before all other objects, the worldly exaltation of their children. In all these cases, and perhaps in all of them equally, God is dethroned from His proper place in the heart: and herein consists the sin of any one ruling passion. All inordinate desire, therefore, is sin; though it should not issue in any particular crime: and all desire is inordinate, which is greater than the desire of pleasing and serving God. For "He that loveth father or mother more than me," says our Saviour, "is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."* "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."†

There are a variety of ways in which the subject before us may be considered. The passage may serve to reprove some persons who are too much conformed to the world; and yet possess certain religious feelings. Perhaps, they are free from great vices: they do many benevolent and useful things: they also praise pious people; and so far, all is well. But there is another side to their character. The world has a strong influence over them; they wish indeed, to ascend to heaven when they die; but they cannot bear the thought of losing that estimation among worldly persons, of which they are in possession. They obey God, in some things: they obey the world, in others. They are pious in the closet; but when they come out of it, they are conformed to the world. On the Sabbath-day, they are in the house of God, and in the congregation of the faithful but they are among the scenes of dissipation in the week

* St. Matt. x. 37. † St Luke xiv. 33.

They say, as the world says; they go, where the world goes; they do, as the world does." They are enslaved by the customs and opinions of their worldly friends and neighbours. The desire of the favour of the world being therefore stronger in them, than the desire of the favour of GOD, the world is their master, and not GOD: or they try, it may be said, to serve both; forgetting, that "no man can serve two masters," and that "ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon."

It is not uncommon to see parents cultivate a certain sort of piety, as a thing graceful and ornamental to a young woman; while, at the same time, they have the utmost dread of its being carried to the inconvenient length of rendering her in any way particular. But how ill do such parents understand the true nature of the religion of CHRIST. How little also do they consult the real interest of those, whose souls GOD has committed to their charge. The piety of young persons thus educated is commonly superficial, and soon vanishes; but if it prove real, they become, perhaps, entangled through their parents in some worldly connection, which constitutes the trial of their remaining days.

We may also employ this passage in the way of reproof to some apparently serious, but not very consistent persons. We now speak of those who talk much of religion, and pass many an hour among those, whom they deem religious; who frequently attend on the means of grace, and are zealous for the gospel: but, though much of their time appears to be very properly spent, and a certain part also of their substance; yet a large portion of their day is consumed in idleness; and a part of their money, in ministering either to their vanity or their luxury. They allot to religion the time and money which they judge to be due to it: but they conceive the remainder to be their own; and are not aware that true religion requires a constant principle of fidelity to GOD in the heart; and the devotion of all our time, and of all our talents, to his service; though

he manner of doing this, like the employments of different servants, or of the same servant at different periods, will be various. Such persons should be taught to fear, lest they also should be found to serve two masters, permitting them to reign by turns; and thus to have a divided empire over their hearts.

Finally, let us all remember that our preference of GOD over every other master must be decided. Let us also bear in mind, that the world is the great enemy, and rival, of GOD. "Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It is called in Scripture, "the evil world,"* "the wicked world," and the world which "lieth in wickedness."† Conformity to it is the great source of ruin to persons of the upper class; and to break with it is the great difficulty. But we must break with it, if we would become the friends of GOD. "Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of GOD."‡

Let us then follow the LORD fully. Let us follow Him, and not the world; Him, and not our own lusts; Him, and no other master. Let it not even be suspected that we have two masters.

* Gal. i. 4. † 1 St. John, v. 19. ‡ St. James, iv. 4.

XXXV.

ST. MATTHEW, VI. 25—34.

Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying What shall we shall eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereoff.

CHRISTIANITY not only instructs us in our duties; it also provides for our comfort. The precepts of CHRIST in this passage evidently tend to our happiness. All anxious care is here forbidden; all uneasy fear respecting the future; all distrust of the good Providence of GOD. The world is full of perturbations: to-day, we dread one evil; to-morrow another.—at one time we are anxious about some friend, or relation; at another, we ourselves are threatened by sickness, or some other adversity. We do not enjoy the comforts of the present hour, because we dread the morrow: and life is spent perhaps in the anticipation of evils,

which, after all, never afflict us. The anxiety most common to man, is that of which CHRIST speaks in this passage, —anxiety respecting our daily bread. In all ages and countries, the larger part of the community have lived in a state of fear concerning the means of their subsistence. The poor labourer of our day dreads, lest he should either fail to find employment, or should be disabled by sickness; lest his family should grow too numerous and expensive to be supported by him; lest bread should rise in price, and the times become too hard for him. Not a few also of the higher class lead a life of no less anxiety, respecting the means of obtaining that which they deem a decent and even a necessary subsistence. But "take no thought," says our SAVIOUR, "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."* Be not at all careful respecting these subjects. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" GOD has given you life: and, if you owe even this to Him, may you not trust to His providing meat to sustain that life? He has given you a body, and may you not trust to his sending raiment to cover that body? Since you owe to Him that which is greater, may you not trust Him for that which is less? "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them."† The birds of the air are evidently provided for by GOD. They gather the food which He sends; not that which they have themselves sown, and reaped, and collected: "Are ye not much better than they?" Are ye not of more value in the sight of GOD, and therefore likely to be more the objects of His care, than many sparrows? "And which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" That is, where is the use of this anxiety? You can no more improve your lot, by your anxious thought; than you can by the same thought, improve your stature. "And why take ye thought for raiment? consider the lilies of the field, how

* St. Matt. vi. 25. † St. Matt. vi. 26

they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." As the fowls of the air are provided for by GOD, so also are the lilies of the field. The fowls of the air fail not to be fed by Him; and, therefore, why should you not trust Him for your food? The lilies of the field fail not to be clothed by Him; and, therefore, why should you not trust Him for your raiment? They are clothed, without their taking thought about it for themselves; for they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet they are clothed so beautifully, "that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if GOD so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Weakness, or want of faith, is the cause of all this distrust "Therefore, take no thought (or, be not anxious) saying what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Let not these common subjects of anxiety trouble you ("for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.") It is the character of the Gentiles, that is, of the unbelieving world, to be ever careful about these worldly things. Leave it, therefore, to those who know not GOD, to be thus corroded with care respecting their temporal interests. "But seek ye first the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness." Let your first concern be to be a member of my kingdom, and a partaker of the righteousness of my gospel; and having secured this better part, encourage yourselves by the hope that the same GOD, who enriches you with the great gift of salvation, will not fail to add whatever worldly blessings He sees to be good and necessary for you. Assure yourselves that all these things shall be added unto you. "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Multiply not your sorrows, by living in perpetual fear of sorrows. Enjoy the blessings which you have: thank GOD for these; and trust Him for the future. Possibly, the evil which you dread, may

* St. Matt. vi. 29, 30.

never come; but trust, that, if it shall come, GOD will support you under it, in some mode, of which as yet possibly you can form no conception. Take care of to-day; and let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself; for it is enough for every day to bear its own burden. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Such is the meaning of the passage before us. We may take occasion to remark upon it, how merciful a GOD is He whom we serve. He does not delight in grieving the sons of men; His precepts tend to make our paths through this world cheerful and easy. An Epicurean philosopher could not have delivered a precept more calculated to spare pain. Let us, however, remember, that the comfort here proffered to us, can be fully enjoyed by him only, who has alreadr secured an interest in the Gospel. We must first believe in God; otherwise how can we trust Him? We must, first, perceive that all things happen by His appointment; otherwise, how can we place confidence in his providential dealings towards us? We must seek, first, his kingdom and righteousness; and then, and then only, may we hope that, being assured of heaven and eternal glory, all these inferior things, "which are needful to the body, shall be added unto us."

XXXVI.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 1, 2.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

MEN of the world are accustomed to accuse the more strict and religious person of severity in judging *them*. "Is it not," say they, "written in that very Bible which you profess to follow, "*Judge not, that ye be not judged?*" Why, therefore, do you not obey your own Scriptures? We, for our part, judge no one; while you, both by thinking ill of human nature in general, and of a multitude of individuals betray a want of that charity which we deem to be the sum of Christian virtue.—By such language as this, many, who are unacquainted with the superior strictness of Christianity, and walk in the broad road, defend their own cause, while they pretend to be pleading that of the Gospel. Many, also, who allow in themselves some habitual vice, make a somewhat similar defence, when charged with the sin which they commit: "allow us to practise the sin to which we are prone; we will tolerate an equal degree of iniquity in you." Let us, therefore, be careful to construe this passage in such a manner as not to favour any unworthy views of Christianity.

It is a maxim, in explaining Scripture, that one text must always be so construed, that other texts may stand. Let it, therefore, be noticed, that our LORD hath said to Christians, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."* Did CHRIST and his Apostles speak favourably of the common practice of the world? Our SAVIOUR testified of it, that its works were evil; and St. John affirmed, "We know that

* St. Matt. v 13, 14.

we are of GOD, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* The precept "*judge not*" cannot, therefore, mean, that Christians ought to judge favourably of the common maxims and conduct of the world. Let us beware then of this unchristian mode of interpreting the text. "He that justifieth the wicked," said Solomon, "and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD."†

Let us now consider, whether sufficient force may not be given to the precept in question, without inclining to any dangerous interpretations of it. It may be considered as forbidding three things: first, a rash and hasty judgment; secondly, a prejudiced and partial judgment; and thirdly a harsh and severe judgment.

First, it forbids a rash judgment. How many decide on the character and conduct of their neighbour, before they have had the means of forming a tolerable opinion. They judge, before they have heard the cause. We should, first, examine and cross-examine: we should, then, weigh and deliberate; and, if the evidence be defective in any part, we should still suspend our judgment. He, who is in haste to determine, has not yet learnt one great rule of wisdom, and one of the most important lessons of the Gospel.

Secondly, this is a precept against partial judgment. We are all, more or less, prejudiced! If a man, for instance, be of another nation, or of an opposite political party, or of a contrary sect in religion; or if he be our rival in trade, or our opponent in any matter, how hard it is to judge fairly of his conduct. It should be the great care of Christians to divest themselves of partiality. Their ambition should be to rise in this respect above the world. Never let us join in the general abuse of some opposite and absent party, which makes a leading part of the conversation of many circles. Candour is an essential Christian virtue; a point not sufficiently considered by many persons who are strict in other respects. "Judge not that ye be not judged:"—if you may judge uncandidly of others, have they not the

* 1 St. John, v. 19. † Prov. xvii. 15.

same right to judge uncandidly of you? If you have your prejudices, why may they not be permitted to have theirs?

But, thirdly, a too severe judgment is also forbidden. We should consider the infirmity which is in man. We should allow for the force of particular temptations. We should reflect, that we may happen to be well informed respecting some sin of our neighbour, and to be totally unacquainted with the bitterness of his repentance on account of it. We should make a distinction between deliberate and allowed sin; and that sin which is the effect of surprise: we should remember, that a man may possibly fall into great vices, through some sudden assault on his virtue; who nevertheless, may be bent on following a religious course of life; and may, on the whole, be in favour with God.

The practice of inferring a man's general habit from some one particular act, and of deciding from a single circumstance on the state of his soul, seems a grievous offence against this precept. It is a bad symptom of the state of *their* souls who presume to judge thus severely.

To conclude; let us, if we would avoid this sin of judging others, reflect on the manner in which we ourselves hope to be judged: our minds are sufficiently fertile in inventing excuses for our own sin; let us endeavour to be as ingenious in respect to the errors of others. Let us make for them the excuses which we expect that they shall make for us. Above all, let us reflect how merciful must be the manner in which we must be judged by GOD, in order to escape His condemnation. As we hope to find mercy, so let us show it; for "with what judgment we judge, we shall be judged; and with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again."

XXXVII.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 3—5.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Our Saviour here intimates, that they, who have a beam in their own eye, are commonly the most inclined to complain of the mote which is in their brother's eye. And does not our own observation justify this saying of Christ? Who is it, that commonly passes the rashest and the severest sentence of condemnation? Is it not the wicked, the licentious, and the profane?

There is, indeed, one occasion, on which immoral persons give full scope to the severity of their tongue; namely, where the person, whom they reproach, bears the character of a religious man. He, who is a sincere servant of God, resolved to lead a holy life, and to live no longer to himself, but to Him who hath died for us, must expect to be most harshly judged by the vain, the worldly minded, and the wicked. They will wait for his halting:—they will dwell, in their conversation, on some little incivility in his manner; some impropriety in his speech; some inattention to the decorum of life. If he should err from inadvertency, the mistake will be charged to design; if from rashness, it will be ascribed to deliberate purpose of heart. A little warmth of temper, in such a man, will be called fury; and any single sin, into which he may be surprised, will be considered as one only of a course of crimes; and will be

proclaimed as from the house-top. Religious persons are often charged with censuring the irreligious; but it may safely be affirmed, that, in general, the saint is not so severe against the sinner, as the sinner is against the saint.

CHRIST may properly be considered as here particularly reproving this disposition in wicked men to censure the pious. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then, shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Thou, who art severe against the children of GOD, and strict to mark in them whatever is in the least amiss; thou, who art, at the same time, thyself an unchaste person, an adulterer, a drunkard, an unjust man in thy dealings, a despiser, a hinderer of GOD's word, "cast out, first, the beam out of thine own eye, and, then, shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." Thou, who knowest not GOD, and art the enemy of His CHRIST,—thou who art thyself sensual, and worldly, not having the Spirit,—presume not to judge him who is spiritual; him, who is struggling with the burthen of his sins; him who prays day and night for mercy; him who trembles, through fear of offending GOD, him whose soul is prostrate before the cross of his SAVIOUR; and who is exercising himself with a watchfulness, of which thou hast no conception, to preserve a conscience void of offence, both towards GOD, and towards man. Thou Pharisee, also, who makest clean the outside, only, of the cup, while corruption is within; who art exact in outward forms of religion, while pride and impenitence are in thy heart, thou, who boastest in thine own righteousness, while thy secret thoughts are full of wickedness; judge not him, who, though less exact in some external observances, and possibly also enjoying less reputation among men, is more truly turned to GOD, in the main bent of his heart. Thou self-deceiver, thou hypocrite, cast out, first, the beam out of thine own eye. Be converted from thy pride, thy self-sufficiency, thy superficial morality, thy false religion, and thy secret sin: then shalt thou be able to

discern the errors, and to estimate the characters of the children of God; having thus "cast out the beam out of thine own eye, then, shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

XXXVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 6.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast y your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The word *holy* signifies sacred, or separated for religious uses. Among the Jews, certain meats were set apart for sacrifice, and for the service of the Temple. "Give not that which is holy to the dogs," would, therefore, seem to a Jew to mean, if literally interpreted,—cast not among the dogs that which is consecrated to the sacred uses of the Temple. It is added, "Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." A pearl is in itself of great value, though of no estimation in the eyes of swine. To cast pearls before swine is, therefore, to throw away that which is very valuable; and, perhaps, also to provoke those, on whom we may think that we bestow a benefit. They may only turn again and rend us. A lesson of religious prudence is conveyed to us by these sayings of Christ: and it is this—that a rash and undiscriminating mode of presenting serious things ought to be avoided. If we speak freely on these subjects before the light, the sensual, and the profane, we may do to them no good; and we may bring,—on ourselves, and on our cause,—much harm. It is to cast pearls before swine. It is to intrude upon them something, indeed

very valuable in itself, but of which the value will not be acknowledged. The result will be, that they will take offence, and become our enemies; they will turn again, and rend us. There are some persons whom no reproof of ours is likely to amend. In such a case let us remember the caution given by our Lord: "Be ye wise as serpents," said He to His seventy disciples, as well as "harmless as doves."* It is recorded of himself, that, when He was in a place, where there existed a remarkable prejudice against Him, "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."† It is observable, also, that the seventy Disciples, when they were first sent forth, were commanded to go not to any house which might accidentally be opened to them; but to inquire, first, in every place, who was worthy, and to take up their abode with such person; not going from house to house: and, if no persons resident in the place should receive them, they were instructed not to remain there; but to cast off the dust of their feet upon them.

This subject is applicable to our own time. Some persons among us seem to have only one maxim in religion: and it is this—that religious truth cannot be too loudly, or generally declared. They would proclaim it in the street, in the market place, and from the house top, if a crowd of persons could but be brought to hear. In preaching the Gospel, they think that no decencies of time and place need be consulted. They profess to be willing to brave every danger in this cause; but their forwardness is only the consequence of a naturally bold and ardent temper, of a temper which Christianity ought to correct and restrain. They are obtrusive in religion, in the same manner as on other subjects.

This passage may be applied in a more general sense: it may, also, be applied, more literally, to those preachers who, by proclaiming the doctrines of the Gospel at unsuitable times and places,—by delivering their sermons, for

* St. Matt. x. 16 † St Matt. xiii. 58.

example, in the streets of our cities,—render the Gospel ridiculous to the profane crowd which is passing by. They may also be said to cast their pearls before swine. They render the Gospel a subject of joke to the giddy, and of contempt and scorn to the profane; who sometimes, also, may literally be said, to "turn again and rend them." This ill usage possibly may be termed persecution. Let it, however, be remembered, that CHRIST has given no direction or authority, to preach his precious truths to the world after this manner; though, undoubtedly, in certain circumstances of the world, this mode of preaching may have been justifiable and even necessary.

We may apply this passage however, more generally, to those who, in any respect, suffer their religious zeal to outrun their prudence; to those, for example, who, unguardedly, introduce religious conversation in mixed or profane company. The world unhappily is far from being generally Christian; and the difficulty of introducing serious topics without offence into an ordinary society is but too plain a proof of this. Men being what they are, it is necessary in some circles to abstain entirely from serious topics; and, in others, to handle them very cautiously, if we venture to touch upon them. Let us not disdain this Christian prudence. We have the authority of CHRIST in favour of it.

Let us not think that every religious word is good, because it is religious. Let us pay regard to person, time, and place. Let us indeed introduce pious conversation where we can with propriety; but let us not force it too much. Let us beware in particular of all singular, affected, and sectarian phrases. These convey little meaning to the irreligious hearer; and yet they give him great offence.

We are aware, indeed, that the lukewarm, the timid, and the time-serving, may avail themselves of this passage in order to justify a contrary extreme,—that of hazarding little, or nothing, in the cause of CHRIST. Let such persons be reminded, that there are occasions, when, unquestionably the wicked should be plainly rebuked; and that, even in

'arge irreligious companies, it may chance to be the indispensable duty of a Christian openly to avow his difference from all around him, and his fidelity to the cause of CHRIST. Opportunities may also be adroitly seized of urging the most serious truths even on a crowd of unbelievers. St. Paul, when brought before king Agrippa, took occasion, though a prisoner at the bar, to preach concerning the faith of CHRIST; and he must not be supposed to have cast his pearls before swine in this case. Paul well knew when to speak; and when to be silent, or reserved. He was carried away by no violence, on the one hand; he had no sinful fear of man, on the other. Free from prejudice himself, he knew how to manage the prejudices of others. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law; to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak."* He was all things to all men, that by all means he might gain some. May we learn this spirit! May we neither disguise our want of zeal by a pretended regard to prudence; nor disregard prudence on the plea of an overflowing zeal.

* 1 Corinth. ix. 20—22.

XXXIX.

ST. MATTHEW VII. 7—11.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

The Gospel is most encouraging in its nature. What can be more inviting than these sayings of Christ? It is considered among men, that, if any one be assured of having that which he is disposed to ask; if there be no doubt of his finding the thing which he seeks; and if, after knocking at a door, it fail not to be opened to him; this is as much as he can desire. By a like assurance of success, does our Saviour invite us to seek those spiritual blessings which are conveyed to us by the Gospel. "Ask, and it shall be given you;" is one of the chief sayings of Christ; and it is here added, "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he, that seeketh, findeth; and to him, that knocketh, it shall be opened."

But what is it exactly, that is intended by these several expressions? To ask, that is, to ask of God, obviously means, to pray to Him; and the promise, that, if we ask, we shall receive, signifies, that God will grant the things for which we pray; it being here indeed presumed, that we chiefly ask that which we principally want, namely, spiritual blessings.

The direction to seek, seems an instruction to use all the

means of grace with due diligence and earnestness: "Seek and ye shall find." This is a promise on the part of GOD that the spiritual means, which we employ, shall infallibly produce, through His aid, their proper spiritual end. The phrase "knock, and it shall be opened unto you," is another expression to nearly the same purport; it serves particularly to show the reasonableness of prayer, and of all other means of grace, and the unreasonableness of neglecting them. As a man wishing to enter into a house knocks at the door, and is not otherwise admitted; so, if we would be received into CHRIST'S kingdom, we must knock, that is, we must apply, according to the proper mode, for admission. And as he who is now without, may remain for ever without, if he do not knock at the door into which he wishes to enter; so may we remain for ever strangers to the blessings of the Gospel, if we do not seek, by prayer, and by the ordinary means of grace, to be admitted. If we ask, we shall have; but if we ask not, it is but reasonable that we should want the things most necessary to us. If we seek, we shall find; but if we seek not, we shall not gain the treasure: and if we knock, it shall be opened to us; but if we choose to take no means of entering, we shall remain without for ever. It is added, "or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone; or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?" GOD here condescends to teach us His own willingness to hear our prayers, by referring to the willingness even of a common earthly parent, to grant the supplication of his children. Nay, the case is still stronger, For "if ye then, *being evil*, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things," (or as it is written in another place,) give *His Holy Spirit*—to them that ask him.

Having thus explained the passage, let us make some observations upon it. And, first, let us expose the error of those who are ready to complain of the hardship of the

Gospel. You think it hard perhaps to be required to renounce the world; to mortify your passions and affections which are upon the earth; and to attain the tempers and perform all the works required. You conceive of religion as of a hard service. But can that be properly called hard, which sufficient means are given us to accomplish? The Gospel is a system of means most admirably adapted to their end. Its doctrines, when duly believed, lead naturally to the practice which is required. The Gospel undoubtedly has much in it which is hard for flesh and blood; but we may observe, also, that it ceases to be hard, when a man has, by prayer, engaged on his side, the powerful help of GOD'S Holy Spirit; and this Spirit GOD is as ready to bestow, as a parent is to give bread to a child that cries to him. True hardship consists in toiling at that for which no sufficient strength is afforded; in seeking that which we are without hope of finding; or in knocking importunately at a door which no one is willing to open to us. True hardship consists in being required, like the Israelites under Pharaoh, to make bricks without straw; or in being required to produce the fruits of the Spirit, while GOD is unwilling to give to our supplications the help of that Spirit, by which alone they can be produced.

This species of hardship is often experienced in the affairs of the present life; the men of this world often toil for that which there is little hope of attaining. The beggar asks, and asks again for some miserable pittance, which, after all his earnestness, it is more than probable that he will not receive. The man, who pursues preferment, employs all the means of obtaining it, though encouraged only by a faint hope. The covetous seek wealth; and the ambitious, honour; animated by no certain knowledge that they shall obtain them. It is not thus in spiritual things. CHRIST here assures us, that the search after these shall infallibly be crowned with success. Let us then labour having this hope. GOD demands that we should use the means,—means indeed which are suited to the very weak

ness of our state. To use them is our part; it shall be His, to make them effectual to their end

But some will reply, "Is it not necessary that I should wait, till GOD inclines me to ask, to seek, and to knock?" Has not CHRIST himself said, that "without me ye can do nothing?"* And has not St. Paul also declared, that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of GOD?"†

We say, in answer, as we have said before, let us take care so to interpret one text of Scripture, that other texts may stand. Our present business is chiefly with the present text: and, therefore, it may be sufficient to remark in this place, that the passage before us breathes the very spirit of encouragement; and that we, therefore, unquestionably pervert it, if we deprive it of this spirit. How different are the plain unsophisticated precepts of CHRIST often found to be, from the same precepts with man's comment added to them. How clear and encouraging the one! How perplexing and discouraging the other!

Is not this precept a direction to ask without hesitation or delay—without fear or distrust? What can be plainer than the words? But you reply, "I suspect, that there is something ambiguous in them." Was CHRIST then an equivocator? Can you imagine, that He used terms encouraging in their sound, and not in their real sense; terms involving some hidden meaning, which defeats the plainer one, and renders this apparently precious promise of none effect:—terms which restrict to a few the encouragement apparently offered to all? Let us beware of thus discrediting CHRIST. He is best honoured when we believe His words in their natural and obvious sense, and venture our souls upon them.

But it is not a cold and listless manner of seeking spiritual blessings which will suffice. A cold prayer, indeed, is no prayer; and an idle search is no search. Our SAVIOUR spoke a parable to His disciples for the express purpose of

* St. John xv. 5. † 2 Cor. iii. 5.

teaching them that it was only by importunity in prayer that they were to prevail. "My son," said Solomon, "if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of GOD."* May we then so call upon GOD, that we may be heard by Him. May we seek Him with all our hearts. Then shall we not fail to be made partakers of that Holy Spirit, which includes all spiritual blessings.

XL.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 12.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

THIS is one of the golden rules given us by CHRIST. It is a rule easy to be remembered, as well as to be understood and it is applicable to a thousand cases. It comprehends indeed, when taken in its most extensive sense, our whole duty to our neighbour. The law of the Jews consisted of two parts, the one regarding GOD; the other, man. Duty to GOD is taught in the four first of the ten commandments; and duty to our neighbour, in all the following ones. "On these two commandments," says CHRIST, in another place, "hang all the law and the prophets." And here He says, "For *this* is the law and the prophets." The duty of man to his neighbour, was the whole subject now under consideration.

Let us proceed to explain the rule. "WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO UNTO YOU DO YE EVEN SO UNTO THEM." The same rule is expressed in another place

* Prov. ii 3—5

thus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* Inordinate self-love is the great source of injustice. How universally does this prevail! Who does not prefer his own interest, his own pleasure, his own honour, to that of other men? When a man has these principles of inordinate self-love reigning in him, he will, of necessity, act unjustly, not in one instance, but in ten thousand: not in matters of property only; but in questions of every kind between him and his neighbour. And while he commits all this wrong, he will be ignorant of it; for self-love blinds the eyes: it makes that to seem just, which is utterly unjust; and it makes many an act which is no more than equitable, appear to be a deed of exalted virtue and generosity.

How important is it, then, to possess a principle of equity for the heart, and not merely a code of rules for the external conduct. "THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF." This is the great principle of Christian morality. Let us love our neighbour as ourselves; and, then, we shall feel for him as for ourselves: then, we shall do to others, as we would they should do to us. Indeed, he, who does generally to others, as he would that others should do to him, can hardly fail to love others as himself; for love is the only principle which can secure so high a practice. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Put yourself, then, in the place of your neighbour. Imagine yourself to be in all respects in his condition, and him to be in yours; and, then, ask yourself, How should I be likely to judge? How much should I be disposed to claim? In doing this, we should enter into a variety of considerations. We should imagine ourselves, for instance, to have been educated under the same prejudices with our neighbour; to be under his temptations, subject to his natural infirmities, possessed of no more than his share of information, and accustomed to dwell among his circle of friends and acquaintance. We

* St Mark xii. 31.

should imagine ourselves pressed by the same want, which perhaps he feels; or tempted by the same false friends, by whom he may possibly be deceived, we should fancy ourselves in his situation, altogether. and not in part only.

Let us consider this golden rule as applied to persons of various classes. And, first, if men in power were often to place themselves in the situation of those whom they govern, how great would be the advantage. How criminal would that ambition, then, appear, of which the object is to make the king great and renowned at the expense of the happiness of the people! What sense of responsibility—what economy in every department—what a strict regard to all the interests of the poor—will be cultivated by a ruler who often places himself in the circumstances of the meanest of his people. And if the people would consider the temptations, as well as difficulties, which kings and ministers experience; if they would reflect, how hard it is to please the many, and how impossible, to please all; how provoking is a spirit of insubordination and discontent; and how strong an incentive to new severities; surely, they would learn more candour in judging their superiors, as well as more acquiescence and submission.

Again, if masters would put themselves in the place of their servants, and would contemplate the trials of that more low and dependent state:—and if servants would ask themselves, what they, if they were masters, would be likely to require of a servant?—if they would reflect, how blameable would seem to them, if they were masters, either the insolence, or the unfaithfulness, or the duplicity, or the sloth, or even the forgetfulness of a servant:—surely, then, each would be disposed to a more candid interpretation of the other's conduct, and to a stricter fulfilment of his own duty.

So also, if parents and teachers would imagine themselves in the place of the children who are subject to them: if, instead of measuring the faults of every child by the degree of inconvenience brought upon themselves, they

they would divest themselves of this selfishness, and would make that allowance for the ignorance and heedlessness of youth, which they themselves would think reasonable, if they were children:—how different would be the judgment, respecting many of the errors of youth; and how much milder often would be the punishment. And if children could be persuaded to reflect, how much pain a parent feels in seeing the stubbornness and disobedience, or the inattention and ingratitude, of his offspring; and how much pleasure, in witnessing the contrary dispositions; then children would learn to be more attentive and obedient.

If the buyer and the seller would put themselves in the place of each other; then, the fraud and iniquity of trade would cease.

If all those, who possess power, would imagine themselves to be in the condition of him who is subject to that power; if the slave owner would imagine himself the slave; and the oppressor suppose himself the oppressed; and would endeavour to do unto others whatsoever he would that others (if they were in his place) should do unto him, how many millions of mankind would experience a termination of their sufferings.

Again, if all those, who are disposed to quarrel with their neighbours, if all the complaining and the censorious and the prejudiced, would be careful to put themselves in the place of the party whom they blame, before they allow themselves to utter any thing to his prejudice; how would peace and harmony be promoted. How extensive is this precept of CHRIST, and how favourable to the happiness of the world?

XLI.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 13, 14.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.

An expression of our Saviour, not unlike to this, is recorded in the 13th chapter of St. Luke. One of His disciples having asked Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." It appears from these words, that Christ was disposed not so much to satisfy the curiosity of His disciples respecting others, as to direct them in the choice of that path which they were themselves to take. It is, as if He had said: the gate indeed is strait; you are to know it by its straitness. Strive therefore, and strive earnestly, in order, that, however strait it may be, ye yourselves may not fail to enter in by it. Remember, also, that many deceive themselves on this important point; many shall seek, or expect, on the Great Day, to enter into heaven, and shall not be able to find admission there.

The words of our Saviour, in this passage which we have the more immediately to consider, evidently contain a very similar admonition. Let us proceed to apply the exhortation to ourselves; and, in doing it, let us unite the meaning of the two texts. Many, it is to be feared, who live in the present day, imagine that they shall hereafter enter into heaven; and shall not be able. And what is the source of this delusion? Perhaps no circumstance contributes more to confirm men in the neglect of religion, than the sentiment, that they are as good as the multitude of their neighbours: and that this multitude cannot but be

saved. How little is it now believed, that "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be few that find it!" The common sentiment is, that the many cannot go to destruction; and that it would be injurious to the character of GOD, to suppose that He can condemn to punishment any great proportion of His creatures. To this opinion the words of the passage,—which we are now considering, as well as of that other text which we have quoted,—stand directly opposed. The plain truth is, that, if we can suppose even a single person to be justly punishable by GOD for his sins, and actually to be punished; we may equally suppose others to be punished in like manner, without the least regard to the circumstance of their being either many or few, if, by like sins and like impenitence, they shall have made themselves obnoxious to like punishment. It may be asked,—"might not the saying of CHRIST in the text be confined to the age of the apostles? may there not be at least some hope, that it applies not in its full force to our own age, country, place of residence, and circle of friends and acquaintance?" Undoubtedly, this is a subject for fair examination. Let every one, therefore, consider the character and manners of the age, into which he is cast, and of the particular circle in which he moves. Let him, however, do this, not forming his judgment of what is necessary to salvation from the ordinary or average practice of his neighbours—the error into which most men fall—but from those Holy Scriptures in which he professes to believe. Let him, in the true spirit of solemn and serious inquiry, take the New Testament into his hand. Let him run over those marks of true discipleship, which are laid down in that sermon of our SAVIOUR which we are considering: and will he not be constrained, though reluctantly, to own, that the saying of the text is but too obviously applicable to the present age, if we make Scripture our rule of judging? "Cast your eyes," says a late pious writer, "for one moment, upon the state of your town or village, or of the neighbourhood where

you live. Select now the best reputed character of your circle: you may mark, perhaps, the accomplished nobleman, the hospitable and friendly gentleman, the fair and civil tradesman, the diligent and expert mechanic, the industrious farmer, and the honest labourer; but how rarely can you superadd to these the forgotten character of a Christian! The highest character, which is commonly aspired after, is to be a man fair in his dealings, complying in his manner, courteous, hospitable, and generous, and of similar popular and self-rewarding virtues. Let us, then," he adds, "with the deepest humility, and the most affectionate thankfulness, take the New Testament into our hands; and examine it as we would any other record, or writing, on which our greatest interests depended. Let us examine what those works are, which are required of us in the Christian vocation. For let public manners be what they will, Christianity is the same to-day that it was in the days of the Apostles; the same terms are proposed, the same practice is expected." The evil of the present day is, not only that men do not believe the awful words of CHRIST in this passage in their strictest interpretation, but, that they do not at all, and in any sense, believe them. This Scripture (like other Scriptures which contradict their prejudices and inclinations) is of no authority. Men even reverse the passage before us; and, while they confess, perhaps, that neither they nor their friends attain to that standard, which they in some degree perceive to be according to Scripture, they comfort themselves by an opinion formed in direct opposition to this text;—that, because they and their party are so numerous, therefore their numbers shall save them. They reverse the passage, and say "wide is, and must be, the gate; and broad must be the way, which leadeth to life; and they must be the many who go in thereat: and strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth to death; and we trust that few there be who find it." Thus, instead of taking warning from the wholesome words of Christ,—instead of suspecting them-

selves to be in the wrong, because they resemble the many; they choose the broad road, because it is broad, perversely fancying, that the breadth of it is the mark, rather that it is the right path, than that it is the contrary. But let us tremble, if we are living, as others live; if we are thinking, as others think; if we are saying, as others say and doing, as others do. There are two parties in the world: there is a religious party, which is small; whose ways are unpopular, and particular; who differ from the common class of men; who lead such a life of piety and strictness, that they are thought by the generality to carry things much too far. And there is another large and numerous party, who seem to themselves, as if they were the whole world; who are travelling securely through life; who are not afraid of temptation; who feel little dread of sin; who meet with no spiritual difficulties, or troubles; who, for the most part, follow natural inclinations; to whom the example of other men forms the great rule of action, the world not being suspected of being an enemy. The very religion of such men is the customary religion. The foundation of their hope is the largeness of their body. "If *we* are not saved," say they, "a large part of the world must be condemned: and this it is impossible to admit, even for a moment, since GOD can never be so harsh as to condemn to punishment so great a portion of His creatures." On this ground, multitudes are content to build their expectations of happiness in eternity. "CHRIST," they say, "died for us, and he will surely save us;" forgetting that the same CHRIST, in whose words they pretend to trust, is He who hath also said, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Now to which of these two parties do we belong? To the large, or to the little flock? "Fear not," says our SAVIOUR, "little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* "Take heed," said the apostle,

* St Luke xii. 32.

'that ye be not condemned with the world." * Noah was a just man in his generation: but Noah only and his family, out of all the multitude, who lived with him on the earth, found favour in the sight of GOD. At a later time, not ten righteous were to be found in a whole city. There was a period when only seven thousand men of all the kingdom of Israel refused to bow the knee to *Baal:* and in the days of CHRIST, the whole multitude, both of teachers and of the people, set themselves against Him. Thus the historical, as well as the perceptive, part of Scripture warns us not to trust to this fatal and delusive argument of numbers. How, indeed, is reformation ever to begin in any one corrupted nation, sect, or party, or circle of persons, if the *current practice* be to form the standard by which men are to judge of their acceptance at the bar of THE ALMIGHTY? The road to destruction will only cease to be that broad road, which it is here described to be, when men shall learn to take the word of GOD for their rule and the ground of their confidence; and when they shall cease to think, that the circumstance of their numbers shall save them.

XLII.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 15, 16.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

OUR SAVIOUR, when He said, "Beware of false prophets," had a particular eye no doubt to the Scribes and Pharisees; whom, at another time, He termed hypocrites, and blind leaders of the blind; which come to you he

* 1 Corinth. xi. 32.

said, "in sheep's clothing." The Pharisees made clean the outside; they were, in appearance, harmless as sheep. The people did not suspect them of enmity to GOD; or to His servants. They saw in them a remarkable scrupulosity; much outward sanctity; great regard to the forms of religion; and several other qualities, which were then likely to constitute respectability, in the eyes of superficial men. But though the Pharisees appeared to the people, in sheep's clothing; yet, inwardly, they were ravening wolves. They were more opposed to the truth than any class of persons; they were the chief antagonists of Christ, and of His followers. St. Paul, before his conversion, remarkably exemplified the practice of a Pharisee: touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless; yet he beyond measure persecuted the Church of GOD, and wasted it. But the precept of our SAVIOUR,—to beware of false prophets, which should come in sheep's clothing,—ought not to be limited to the Pharisees. Many deceivers appeared in the first ages of the Church. The great apostle of the Gentiles remarks to the elders at Ephesus: "For I know this, that, after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* And this expectation,—of the false prophets which should appear,—constituted a chief source of his anxiety; "therefore watch," said he, "and remember, that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears."† The same apostle guarded the Corinthians against certain false apostles—deceitful workers transforming themselves into the apostles of CHRIST; "for Satan himself," he added, "is transformed into an angel of light."‡ In his epistle to the Galatians, he complains of certain Judaizing teachers, by whom he had been supplanted in their esteem. St. Jude, also, in his epistle, speaks of certain men, who had crept in unawares, 'turning the grace of our GOD into lasciviousness; and

* Acts xx. 29, 30. † Acts xx. 31. ‡ 2 Corinth. xi. 13, 14

denying the only LORD GOD, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST."* They are, further, described as despising dominion;† as "speaking evil of dignities;"‡ and as going "in the way of Cain;" "and after the error of Balaam for reward;" and as perishing in the "gainsaying of Core."§ We have made these several quotations from Scripture, in order to show, that the intrusion of false prophets or teachers into the church constituted one of the great evils of the first ages. Well, therefore, might our SAVIOUR say to the people, "Beware of false prophets." But how was the simple multitude to distinguish the true prophets from the false? "Ye shall know them," says CHRIST, "by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"‖ This is the great test by which the pretensions, both of public teachers, and of private Christians, are to be examined. Common sense, indeed, dictates this mode of judging: and there is often a remarkable agreement between the sayings of our SAVIOUR and our own common sense. As the nature of a tree is known by its fruits, so is the nature of a man's religion. "Bring forth," said John the Baptist to the pretenders who gathered round him, "fruits meet for repentance."¶ "I have chosen you, and ordained you," says CHRIST to his Apostles, "that ye should go and bring forth fruit."** We are become dead to the law, says St. Paul, and joined or married to CHRIST, "that we should bring forth fruit unto GOD."†† In the time of the Reformation, the mode of judging resorted to was that which is here recommended by CHRIST. The people perceived that the Reformers were a strict and self-denying people, while the body of the Popish priesthood were abominably corrupt. Undoubtedly the people in some measure compared the doctrines of the two parties; but many of them judged, in a still greater degree, by a comparison of the lives of each. By their fruits, the true and the false prophets were ther

* St. Jude 4. † 2 St. Peter ii. 10. ‡ 2 St. Peter ii. 10.
§ St. Jude 11. ‖ St. Matt. vii. 16. ¶ St. Matt. iii. 8.
** St. John xv. 16. †† Rom. vii. 4.

known. And thus our SAVIOUR's maxim was the means of guiding the multitude safely (even in a dark age) into the true paths; and of re-establishing a more pure religion in the world. The precept reaches also to us; and is of standing use in the church. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing." The multitude are always easily imposed upon; those especially become dupes in matters of religion, who are not very religious themselves.

There is a superstition, in whose eye the mere name, or dress, of a minister exhibits all the sanctity which is required; they reverence the robe, and the robe only. The Pharisees acquired much respect after this manner. Others require that to the sacred robe a little outward decency of character should be added. There is another class, who think that bold pretensions to inspiration, or apostleship; that zeal, as ardent as that of Paul, and strong confidence, like his; (though without his faith and love, his humility and patience, his gentleness and meekness, his prudence and wisdom, and discernment, and all his other graces,) are sufficient marks of a true prophet. But by their fruits, says CHRIST, they shall be known. Paul himself used often to appeal both to his doctrine; and to his manner of life, conversation, faith, charity; and he, by living among his converts, afforded to them an opportunity of being thoroughly acquainted with his character. "I have coveted," he said, "no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities."* As he was foremost in authority and rank in the Church; so also was he foremost in labours, in sufferings, and self-denials. To these, when competitors arose and endeavoured to undermine him, he was accustomed to make appeal; insomuch that he sometimes would appear guilty of vanity, or at least of too much egotism; if he had not pleaded the necessity for boasting, under which these false teachers had laid him. Ministers, in all ages

* Acts xx. 33, 34.

must be content to be judged of, in the same manner with Paul the Apostle. By their fruits, they must be known; and not by the clerical decencies of their appearance; not by the mere profession of their faith; not by the soundness of their preaching; not by the regularity of their ordination only. If therefore, we would provide ourselves with means of judging, adapted to all ages of the church; and if we would be preserved safe, in spite of the degeneracy both of ministers and people, let our rule be that of CHRIST. Let us judge our very teachers, by their fruits. On the one hand, indeed, we ought to reverence the office of a Christian minister. St. Paul reverenced the office of High Priest; and once testified his reverence, in a remarkable manner: but, on the other hand, let us be cautious, how we commit the instruction of our souls, respecting the way to eternal life, to men unacquainted with that way: to men, especially, who show, by their works, that they are of the number of those false prophets, against whom we are expressly warned by JESUS CHRIST. Let it, moreover, be remembered, that ministers should be strict, with a truly Christian strictness; that they should be humble and self-denying; raised above the love of this world; and above the fear of worldly persons; given to much prayer, as well as to much exertion in the ministry; alive to GOD, and spiritually-minded; being of that "kingdom which is not of this world."* These are the virtues of a Christian minister; and when these adorn the character, let us esteem the possessor of them, very highly in love, for his work's sake. It would tend much to the purification of the Christian church, and to the rectification of its very doctrine, if private Christians would agree to judge of the excellencies of their ministers much more by their works (taking works in their large and scriptural sense) than they are accustomed to do. And it would be well, if ministers also would bear in mind, that it is neither parts nor learning, neither pulpit eloquence, nor any power of attracting a congrega-

* St John xviii. 36

tion; that it is neither a right understanding of doctrines, nor skill in interpreting prophecy, nor talent in explaining the more difficult parts of Scripture, nor knowledge of all the evidences of Christianity, nor rank and station in the Church, which constitutes their sufficient title to the ministry. We know, from Scripture, that if a man should possess even miraculous gifts, and yet be destitute of the one lasting grace of charity, he is but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."*

XLIII.

ST. MATTHEW VII. 17—20.

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Our Saviour having instructed the people to beware of false prophets, having observed that by their fruits they should be known, adds, in these words, a general truth of great importance. "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit:" that is, the nature of a tree is determined by its fruit; a good tree yielding good fruit, and a bad tree being known by the bad fruit which it produces.

This is the truth, which we are now to consider; a truth, which seems plain and undeniable. Many men, nevertheless, are far from adopting it, as a maxim of their religion

* 1 Corinth. xiii. 1.

The bad fruit of a tree is, indeed, willingly referred to the evil nature of the tree; but is bad fruit in the life as readily charged to something bad in the heart? How ready are most persons to say, even while they acknowledge their sins, that they trust, it was not any fault of the heart, which was the cause of them: not knowing that sin proceeds but from the heart. The heart is that fountain from which flows every thing that is either good or evil. This is the doctrine of our SAVIOUR,—"A good man," says CHRIST, "out of the good treasures of the heart bringeth forth good hings."* And again, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies."† This, also, is the doctrine of reason and of common sense: though some, who have been denominated "*rational divines*," seem to teach the contrary. "It is true," say these teachers, "that most men are in fact corrupt; but this corruption arises not from any thing wrong in the nature of man, but from external causes: the corruption is accidental, adventitious, and superinduced. It results from a wrong education, from evil influence, from some particular temptation, and from bad example; and not from any root of evil in the man, not from any evil nature, and a naturally bad heart. The heart," say they, "is naturally good; though the life, we grant, is evil:"—that is, the tree is good, though the fruit brought forth be evil. How is it (it may be asked, in answer to the remark) that men are so easily turned aside by a bad education; and are with so much difficulty restrained even by a good one? are so ready to be operated upon by an evil influence; so willingly yield to every temptation, and are so prone to follow a bad example? How can this happen, unless there be a previous bias to evil? Surely a disposition to commit some sin, as soon as any temptation to the sin shall offer itself, is an evil disposition; and a heart and nature inclined to corrupt indulgences, as soon as the several occasions of corrupt indulgence shall present themselves, may, with

* St. Matt. xii. 35. † St. Matt. xv. 19.

great propriety of language, be called an evil nature, and an evil heart.

To apply, then, to ourselves this saying of CHRIST:—Let us learn from it to consider the several sins of our lives, not as so many separate, insulated, and merely external, and incidental acts; for if we do this, they will seem very slight and inconsiderable; but as so many indications of an evil heart within, as so many concurring proofs that our very nature is corrupt. This is the light, in which Christianity teaches us that all our particular sins ought to be considered. We shall err grossly and fatally for ourselves, if we do not bear about with us this sentiment concerning them. When we reflect on a sin which we have committed, we should trace the sin to its source, namely, to the evil disposition of the heart. Thus it was that David did, when he was contemplating his peculiar sin in the matter of Uriah: "Behold," says he, (after confessing his particular guilt,) "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."* He did not plead, that his crime was accidental, and the mere effect of temptation; but while he is freely confessing his criminal act, he seems to be naturally conducted on to an acknowledgment, that the seeds of this sin had been in him from his birth; and that the particular corruption, which he was deploring, was only one instance of the general corruption of his very nature. He, therefore, cries earnestly to GOD, and says, "create in me a clean heart, O GOD, and renew a right spirit within me."† This last expression of David declares, that since evil actions proceed from an evil heart, it is necessary, first, to make the heart good, if we would effectually reform the life. Make the tree good, said our SAVIOUR, (in another place,) and then shall the fruit also be good. It was the error of the Pharisees, that they looked not to the heart, but only to the outward acts of the life: they minded not the motive from which an action sprung: and is there not among us the same error? Do the generality

* Psalm li. 5 † Psalm li. 10.

of men, when they are considering the quality of an action, inquire whether the act be done in the true fear and love of GOD, and in obedience to the commands of JESUS CHRIST? Do not men think it sufficient, if, either from pride, from emulation, from a regard to character, from fear of temporal punishment, or from a sense of worldly interest benefits to society are produced? It is but a scanty produce, at the most, of useful works, which is obtained by the help of corrupt and secondary motives. Make the tree good; and, then, shall the fruit also be good. Let the mind and heart be renovated; and, then, shall there be abundant as well as right fruit, in the life. The man himself must be new made: there is an old man in us, which must be changed. "Put off," says the Apostle, "the old man; and put ye on the new man, which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness."* "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."† "Lie not one to another,"‡ says St. Paul; and why? Because lying is a shameful vice, or a very dreadful sin? No; not on this ground only: but lie not, ye Christians, one to another, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."§ "For in CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."‖ "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of GOD;"¶ for "that, which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that, which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit."** The renovation of the heart, or inward man, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, or, in other words, the doctrine of regeneration, connects itself with the saying in the text. "Create and make in *us*, O LORD, a new heart. Grant unto us, that thing, which by nature we cannot have. May we be baptized not with water only, but with the Holy Spirit: and having made us partakers of a new nature help us to walk in newness of life."

* Eph. iv. 22, 24. † Romans xii. 2. ‡ Col. iii. 9.
§ Col. iii. 9. ‖ Gal vi. 15 ¶ St. John iii. 3
** St. John iii. 6

But, lastly, let us notice, also, that awful admonition, which is at the end of this passage, that "every tree, that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire."* These are the same words which John the Baptist had before used;† for our SAVIOUR and the Baptist are in perfect unison with each other: they both thought, that the tree was to be known by its fruits; and also that the corrupt tree was to be cut down, and cast into the fire. By their fruits, as was before shown, all are to be tried. By our fruits we ourselves are each of us to be known. May we then be able to stand this test; and in particular, may we take care that our fruits are not merely a few of those easy and self-rewarding virtues which nominal Christians, as well as unbelievers, are able to practise; but that they are those true fruits of righteousness, which are, by JESUS CHRIST, to the praise and glory of GOD.

XLIV.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

THERE seems to be no subject on which men have occasion for more strong and reiterated warnings, than that of the danger of mistaking a profession of the Gospel, and an assent to it, for the faith which is at once practical and saving.

The conclusion of our SAVIOUR's Sermon on the Mount is made up of successive cautions on this head; and, in

* St. Matt. vii. 19. † St. Matt. iii. 10.

another place, He says, "why call ye me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say;"* that is, "why do ye profess to take me for your LORD, when ye show that I am not your LORD, by not fulfilling the things which I require of you?" Profession only binds a man the more to practice; it cannot be permitted to stand in the *place* of practice. The attainment of heaven would be an easy thing indeed; wide would be the gate, and broad would be the way; if merely saying, "LORD, LORD," would suffice. That, which makes the gate so narrow, and causes so few to enter in, no doubt, is chiefly this;—that they alone can be permitted to enter into heaven, who do the will of their Father which is in heaven.

We shall consider this passage, first, as it respected the persons to whom it was immediately addressed; and, then, as applying also to modern Christians.

Among the multitude, who gathered round our SAVIOUR, there were many who lent a favourable ear to His preaching; and nevertheless, were not of that "little flock,"† to whom only He promised the kingdom. There was much in the character, as well as sayings of CHRIST, which was calculated to attract the notice of the Jews. They were now expecting a MESSIAH: and CHRIST professed himself to be that Personage. They saw Him work miracles, in proof of His mission; and these were chiefly miracles of mercy, which would be likely to produce a strong prepossession in His favour. He taught truths, which could not fail to be interesting to their minds; He spake much of a new Kingdom, of heaven; He attacked the religious sentiments of the age; inveighed against the character, as well as doctrine, of the priests; delivered a variety of striking parables; and appealed to the common sense, and feelings, and natural consciences of His hearers. We, therefore cannot wonder, that many gathered round Him. Among these, there would be not a few light and inconstant hearers, who might agree for the moment, but who, afterwards, pos-

* St. Luke vi. 46. † St. Luke xii. 32.

sibly might make part of that multitude, which cried, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him."

It is likely, that there would be many who would go much further than these; many who would hear CHRIST with attention, and respect, and with a prejudice in His favour; who would be ready to rank themselves among the most faithful of His followers; who would be eager in making comparisons between CHRIST and his enemies, the most honourable to CHRIST; who would extol His character, admire His sayings, and be forward in his cause; and who, in a word, would come short in nothing, except in fulfilling the things which He commanded them.

Our Saviour, in the close of His Sermon on the Mount, makes a very close application of it to all His self-deluding followers. He had, just before, warned them against false teachers; whom, said He, ye shall know by their fruits: and He now bids them use the same test for themselves.

The term "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,"* is certainly not to be understood in the strictest sense which it will bear: for we are told, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;"† and it is one design of this very Sermon on the Mount, which remarkably exhibits the strictness of the Law of GOD, to show to us our own violations of it; and thus to prove, that it is mere mercy which must save us.

There is, however, a real disposition to unreserved obedience, and an actual attainment of some good measure of it, to which it is a main intention of the Gospel that we should be brought: and, unless we arrive at this point, the Scripture teaches us, in divers places, that we must beware of thinking that we are accepted by GOD. for "he, that doeth righteousness," says the apostle, "is righteous:"‡ and, again, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving your ownselves."§

The term "will of GOD" has a very broad signification

* St. Matt. vii. 21. † Eccles. vii. 20.
‡ 1 St John iii 7. § St. James i. 22

It is sometimes extended in Scripture, even to that which we are to believe, as well as to all which we are to practise. It is the will, the commandment, the work of GOD, "that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." It often means general holiness; thus, it is observed by an apostle, "for this is the will of GOD, even your sanctification."* The general sanctification of the human heart is that which GOD may be said to will; and this is one very fair interpretation of the expression of the text. The Sermon on the Mount will itself explain to us, what it was that CHRIST meant, by the expression in this place: for He uses it with a reference to the several precepts and sayings which He had been just delivering.

Let us, in the second place, apply this saying of CHRIST to the people of our own age and country. "Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."† And, first, it may serve to reprove some who,—because they are not Atheists or Deists, but are professors of Christianity; because they call CHRIST "LORD, LORD," in the slightest of all the senses in which the term can now be understood,—conclude, therefore, that they are members of the kingdom of heaven.

An opinion has prevailed in modern times, that the mercies of CHRIST belong, of right, to all who are baptized and call themselves Christians; with the exception only of those few persons by whom some extraordinary crimes have been committed. With a view to favour this opinion some have given an unfair representation of the nature of baptism: they have described it not so much as the taking upon us of the *profession* of Christianity, and the receiving of the *outward sign* of an inward regeneration, but as altogether constituting regeneration itself. It may be asked of such persons;—can all those, who have been baptized, and who profess Christianity,—with the exception only of a few profligates—be said to fulfil in any Scriptural sense

* 1 Thess. iv. 3. † St Matt vii. 26.

he will of their Father which is in heaven? Is it not clear, that many of them never even think of Scripture; nor of that will of GOD which Scripture is intended to teach?

Others carry their profession of Christianity somewhat further. They profess to pay attention to the Scriptural precepts; and thus to do the will of their heavenly Father The persons, however, of whom I now speak, by no means understand the will of GOD aright. They interpret Scripture carelessly and loosely. They are apt, on the one hand, to weaken its doctrines; while, on the other, they also lower the practical part. They reduce, especially, the spiritual sayings of CHRIST, in His Sermon on the Mount, to something which is easy for a worldly man to perform; to something which may be attained without any fervent prayer to GOD, or any influence of His Holy Spirit; to something, which may exist independently of the efficacious faith of the Gospel; to something, which, instead of amounting to the will of GOD, amounts to little more than the morality of infidels.

But we must speak also of those, who are more zealous for the doctrines of the Gospel, and profess to be more strict in their interpretations of Scripture. There is in many of these (what belongs indeed to the very nature of man) a disposition to elude, in one way or other, the self-denying and practical part of religion. Their zeal for doctrine is of that kind which prevents their extending their attention sufficiently to practice. The fault of such persons is the converse to that of those, of whom I was before speaking. *They* were described as deceiving themselves, by imagining that they did the will of GOD, when they only did a few ordinary moral duties. *Those*, of whom I now speak, perceiving the mere morality of the others, and their inattention to doctrinal truths, run towards the contrary extreme—of rendering almost every text doctrinal; and of discrediting what is practical in the instructions of their teachers, by giving to it the name of "moral."

To some persons of this class the practical interpretation even of a practical text gives dissatisfaction, if not offence. It has happened, that the whole Sermon on the Mount, while its spirituality has been overlooked by some, has, by others, been represented as a mere description of the severity of the law, and as serving only to lay a foundation for the doctrine of justification by faith. It has scarcely been at all considered by these persons, as conveying any direct exhortation to practice; a mode of treating those many practical pages, which must seem surprising to every plain Christian, who is unacquainted with doctrinal dispute. How completely practical, above all, is that text which we are now considering. "Not every one, that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."* Surely we shall find it hard to elude that obligation *to do*, under which our SAVIOUR has laid us by His expression in this place.

Let us, then, beware of this error. Let us not,—under the idea that the faith of the Gospel is of itself to produce obedience,—refuse attention to obedience; or be sparing in our pains to become acquainted with any branch of practice. Let us fear, lest, too much neglecting the sundry precepts of CHRIST and His apostles, we should adopt, in their stead, the uncertain dictates of our own feelings, and imaginations, or the strictnesses of our own narrow sect; and lest we thus substitute the morality of men, in the place of the true graces of the Gospel.

It has happened from this cause, that many persons, who are strict in some particulars, have been greatly defective in others. In particular, there is a meekness, and candour; a disposition to judge ourselves, rather than our neighbour; a modesty, and humility; and an exact uprightness, and integrity in doing to others as we would they should do unto us; to which some, who are well instructed in doctrine, do not attain: and in which our SAVIOUR'S Sermon

* St. Matt. vii. 21.

on the Mount would instruct them, if they would give a practical attention to it.

But there are several other classes, of whom we would also briefly speak.

Some are enthusiasts. They have seen visions and revelations of the LORD. All is miraculous in their religion. Some of these persons are often seen evidently to fail in doing the will of their Father which is in Heaven. There is a sober performance of all the duties of life, and a prudent and careful abstinence from sin, which as much form a part of the will of GOD, as the most spiritual exercises.

Others, again, speak only of faith. They seem able to believe every thing. They appropriate to themselves all the promises of the Bible; though no fruit of holiness be to be seen in them: they substitute, in the place of faith in CHRIST, an unbounded confidence in their own particular salvation: they call CHRIST, "LORD, LORD;" but do not the will of their Father which is in Heaven. Many are the ways in which men deceive themselves, so as to forget the plain and practical nature of the Gospel.

A few, by too much confining their attention to the corruption which is in man, and too little admitting the readiness of GOD, for CHRIST'S sake, to give us grace to save us, are led to mourn over their depravity, rather than to oppose it. Theirs is a barren wish for holiness; rather than the actual attainment of it. Their religion consists in profession, and in words; or in sighs, and in tears, and in sorrowful complaining of themselves; rather than in real action, and practice.

Let us make due allowance for the various kinds of human infirmity: nevertheless, let us not fail to remember, and insist, that, after all, THIS IS THE TEST by which men of every sect, character, and opinions, must be tried:—'Not every one, that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Small as our fruits of holiness may be, yet some fruits must be brought forth; or we never shall be saved.

Religion must appear in the life; it should not altogether be hid in the heart. External works, indeed, which proceed from a false motive, avail nothing. To do these only, is not to do the will of our Father which is in Heaven.

There are, however, new dispositions to be attained, new habits to be learned, new victories over sin to be achieved by every Christian; for, "if any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

"Be ye, therefore, doers of the word, and not hearers only." Trust not to your being the followers of some true minister of the Gospel; nor to the delight which you may feel in hearing him. Multitudes, as has already been stated, heard CHRIST with pleasure, while He preached to them from the Mount; who were, afterwards, condemned, because they did not the things which he commanded them. He warned them, towards the end of His discourse, again and again, on this great subject. Let this text, then, be continually sounding in your ears; let it recur to us at the end of every sermon which we hear;—"Not every one that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven."

* 2 Corinth. v. 17.

XLV.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 22, 23.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

THE Apostles, and first preachers of Christianity, were endowed with the power of working various miracles; in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, they were able to make the blind to see, and the lame to walk; and they even raised the dead. They, also, by their word, cast out devils. We learn however, from this passage, as well as from some others, that all these miraculous gifts were not to be accounted as any proof that the soul of the possessor of them should be saved: for the invariable doctrine of Scripture is, that, when the Day of Judgment shall come, the point to be inquired, respecting every individual, will be not, whether he had wrought miracles; not, whether he had cast out devils; not, whether he had done in the name of CHRIST many wonderful works; but whether he had been a worker of iniquity. The division of mankind, on that day, will be —into holy and unholy—into righteous and wicked—into those who were doers of the word, and those who were hearers only. The worker of miracles, who lived in his iniquity, shall then perish with the multitude of the ungodly; and if the man, whom GOD Himself had thus gifted, shall be condemned for being a sinner, what sinner shall escape? However men may plead their familiarity with CHRIST, or the great things which they have done in His name; however confidently they may come and claim His salvation, however numerous, also, such persons may be, yet He will deny them before the assembled world: for

there shall be but one reply to all the multitude of the wicked,—"I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity."*

Such is the meaning of the words before us. Let us now extend in some degree their signification; for the sake of applying them the better to the times in which we live.

Miracles have now ceased. We are in no danger of pleading, on the day of judgment, our performance of these as a testimony that we were friends and followers of Christ. There are, however, many other grounds of false confidence and hope, on which we may build. And first, there is a general danger, lest men should trust in their gifts and talents; rather than in their Christian virtues and graces, as an evidence of their title to heaven.

It is hard, perhaps, for some people to avoid entertaining religious hope on account of these. The preacher, for instance, who has great powers of eloquence; who can move at his will the affections of his audience; who can alarm their souls with the fear of Hell; can charm them with the description of Heaven; can present to them a just and lively view of the dreadful nature, and consequences, of sin; who, perhaps, has really converted many souls to God, and has witnessed this fruit of his labours; finds it hard to persuade himself, that all these are no sufficient evidence, that his own soul shall be saved. Has the preacher himself learned not to do iniquity? That will be the question on the great day. The test will be the same for the high, and for the low; for the man of talents, and for him who had the meanest parts; for the author, who edified half a nation by his writings; for the minister who converted thousands by his preaching; and for every individual among the people: and to all, in all ranks, and in all ages, who, tried by that test, are found wanting Christ will say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Again, others trust to a certain zeal for the Gospel; and to some exertions which they have made, or trouble, which

* St. Matt. vii. 23.

.hey have taken, in the cause; and this is their evidence of salvation. They have subscribed, and perhaps largely, to the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts: they have been peculiarly forward in promoting the salvation of the poor heathen: or, what is much more, they have themselves gone forth with the name of JESUS in their mouths, as missionaries in the service: but have they left off to do iniquity? Have they conquered the sins of their own hearts,—they, who go forth to contend against the sins of others? We ask, not whether they are perfect; but only, whether their own tempers have been subdued; their pride and vanity, brought down; and their passions regulated in that degree, which the word of GOD shows to be necessary in every real Christian? Have they learnt, each to take the lowest place; to do nothing through strife and vain glory; and to esteem others better than themselves? Have they attained to the self-denial of a disciple; as well as to the spirit of peace, harmony, and love. It is not one great act, which determines a man to be a true disciple of CHRIST; so much as his daily and hourly temper and conduct. Let them not think, that some one heroic deed is all, which is necessary to prove that they are sanctified by GOD's Spirit. It is by the daily and hourly acts which they perform, and by the general tempers which they evince, that their real sanctification is to be known. It is not a pilgrimage made once in a man's life, like that of the Mahometan to Mecca; it is not a Crusade to the Holy Land; it is not an ebullition of zeal to go forth in these days as a missionary to the heathen; which is a sufficient evidence of discipleship. Many shall trust on the Day of Judgment to some great thing, which they have achieved in the cause of CHRIST; who shall then be condemned on account of their having never been cleansed from their own iniquity. Many will have laboured, as they will plead, to save others, who themselves shall not be saved; for nothing can stand in the stead of that sanctification of a man's own heart, which the Scriptures describe as neces-

sary; no religious language in the mouth; no gifts, or talents of the mind; no confident hope of Heaven, in the imagination; no zeal to go forth in order to convert others;—for "without holiness no man shall see the LORD."* "Not every one, that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven: but he, that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."†

Again, lastly, there are some, perhaps, who trust to a general exemplariness in their lives, and the great usefulness of their conduct; while, nevertheless, some allowed sin is lived in. Such persons betray a total unsoundness in their heart. A man may found hospitals; may establish seminaries of learning, or of religion; may build Churches; may take the lead in all useful institutions; and yet be nothing. He may do all this, in order to still his conscience, which would otherwise trouble him on account of his living in some secret iniquity. Though we should suppose a man to be engaged in saving an empire from ruin, and to be celebrated as the greatest patriot of his age; and as the best supporter both of the religion, and liberties, of his country; still, if he live in habitual iniquity, if, amidst all those public deeds, by which he acquires a just renown, he should be, in the sight of GOD, a secret sinner;—unquestionably, the sentence in this passage is directed against him, as much as against more known, and obvious, and gross offenders: "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity" For, "many, that are first, shall be last; and the last shall be first;"‡ "for many be called but few chosen."§

* Heb. xii. 14. † St. Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23.
‡ St Matt. xix. 30 § St. Matt. xx. 16.

XLVI.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 24—29.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.
And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:
For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

PART I.

Our Saviour thus ends His Sermon on the Mount. He had had many hearers: and they seem not to have disapproved of His sayings; for all which is observed upon the subject is, that "the people were astonished at his doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."

There are many parts of Scripture which show that a mere disposition to hear religious truths is very far from being a clear proof of true religion. In the parable of the sower, our Saviour speaks of no less than four sorts of hearers; only one of which is represented as hearing to good effect. Instances also abound, in the historical part of the New Testament, of persons sufficiently willing to hear, who were irreligious characters. Multitudes went to hear John the Baptist, in the wilderness; who were described by him, as continuing in a state of utter impenitence. Herod, also, heard John the Baptist, "gladly;" yet, at a subsequent period, he put him to death. It is more

than probable, as already intimated, that many of that multitude, which heard Christ's Sermon on the Mount, made afterwards a part of that other multitude which thought it not fit that He should live; and cried out, "Not this man, but Barrabas."*

There was a certain time, during which the great body of our SAVIOUR's hearers were very far from feeling any offence; they often seemed to take part with Christ. They gazed at His miracles; and, while admiring them, they were disposed (as is the common way of the multitude) to extend their praise to every one of His sayings, and every one of His acts. They said, "He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."† But the change, which soon followed in the disposition of the people, plainly shows, that, at the time, when they appeared to be the partizans of CHRIST, and were the willing hearers of his Gospel, they by no means entered into the true nature of it. They neither perceived what sacrifices the real followers of CHRIST would have to make; nor what loss of reputation, to incur; nor what worldly interests, to risk; nor what self-denials, to exercise; nor what persecutions, to endure. All this, indeed, was implied, and more than implied, in that Sermon on the Mount, to which they had given ear; but many of them heard it, probably, in that loose and careless way, which renders even the plainest and most searching discourse, of no effect. Others of them might admit the general truths; and neglect self-application of them. Others might apply them, but apply them carelessly; and, because they already practised some part of the precepts which they had heard, or something like them, might too easily assume, that they did as much as was strictly necessary: and not a few might mistake their own transitory approbation of what was spoken, for a disposition to pay steady and actual obedience to it; not considering, that to approve is one thing and to do that, which we approve, is often quite another

* St. John xviii. 40. † St. Mark vii. 37.

It is worthy of notice, that, when our SAVIOUR, on one occasion, instead of declaring only the general tempers necessary in His disciples, required of a young man, who came to hear Him, a specific act of self-denial; the individual in question, though he had come in the very character of a learner, ceased to follow CHRIST. And "wha lack I yet?"* said this young man to our SAVIOUR. And "JESUS said unto him; If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me: but when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."†

Our SAVIOUR is represented to have taken many means of deterring men from making that hasty profession of His gospel, to which they were inclined. He was not ambitious to draw a crowd about His person; or to speak to a large auditory; or, by the addition of a certain portion of superficial followers, to swell the numbers of His sect. He warned His hearers to count the cost, before they pretended to become His disciples; and to beware, lest they should incur the shame which belongs to him who begins to build a tower, and is not able to finish it. It may be proper here, also, to remark, that one of the most pointed charges brought by CHRIST, and His Apostles against the Jewish nation—that nation, which, on account of sinfulness, was now about to be cast off—seems to have been, that of having become mere hearers of their law, instead of doers of it. "A certain man," said our SAVIOUR, "had two sons; and he came to the first," (that is, to the Gentiles) "and said, Go, work to-day in my vineyard; and he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second," (meaning the nation of the Jews) "and said likewise: and he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not."‡ That is, the Gentiles repented at last, and really paid that obedience to GOD, which his former professing people, the Jews, had only

* St. Matt xix 20. † St. Matt. xix. 21, 22 ‡ St. Matt. xxi 28–30

pretended to pay. Our SAVIOUR, also, takes notice of the same indisposition to attend to practice, in the Pharisees. "Whatsoever they bid you observe," said CHRIST to some of his followers, "that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not."* Moreover the apostle Paul, in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, when summing up his heavy charge against the Jews, dwells particularly on their disposition to hear their law, as well as to become teachers of it to others, while they paid no obedience to it themselves. "Thou, therefore," says he, "which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? For the name of GOD is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."† And it is partly in the same spirit, that he said to them, before: "For not the hearers of the law are just before GOD; but the doers of the law shall be justified."‡

XLVII.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 24—29.

SAME SUBJECT.—PART II.

THE Scriptures, then, let it be remembered, repeatedly guard us against that disposition, which there is in man, to betake himself to a religion which consists merely in talking, or in hearing; or in some way, stops short of real practice.

Let us now proceed to show, how this subject applies itself to the present age. It is obvious to any person of discernment, that the world now abounds with persons who can read and admire religious books; and can hear and ap-

* Rom. ii. 13. † Rom. ii 21, 22 24. ‡ Rom ii. 13.

prove very religious Sermons ; and yet, in their own lives, are irreligious. And it is important, both that such persons should themselves be reproved ; and that others should be guarded against complimenting men of this class for their religion ; and thus encouraging their delusion.

The causes, which now lead them thus to hear and approve, what, nevertheless, they will not practise, are, in part, no doubt, the same as those to which we have already adverted. Sometimes, men are prejudiced in favour of a book or a sermon, by some high idea which they happen to have conceived of the writer or of the preacher, either in respect to his religious wisdom, and orthodoxy ; or to his humanity, and benevolence ; or to his learning, and talents, or to his rank and estimation, in the world, or in the Church :—just as the multitude were disposed, at one time to favour the preaching of CHRIST, through that high idea of His character, with which His miracles had just before inspired them. For men do not choose suddenly to find fault with him, whom they have been lately led to praise; and under whose banners they have recently been enlisted.

Again, there are also many now, perhaps, as there were formerly, who both hear, and read, what relates to religious subjects, with a degree of carelessness and inattention, as well as of dulness and ignorance, which are almost inconceivable ; and which are only to be accounted for, by the unconcern in which they live in respect to their souls. But we ought here to speak, more particularly, of that class of persons, who have both an ear to hear, and a tongue to speak, concerning religion, and seem in some serious way to receive the Gospel ; but are by no means prepared to follow up those doctrines to which they assent, into all their practical consequences. Some of these persons not only profess the Gospel, and hear it, and speak of it ; but they commend it also to others ; they extol the preacher of it ; and they put themselves forward as the most zealous members of his party : but they are not yet rightly aware, what new tempers they have to exercise ; what new trials, to

encounter; what new self-denials, to practise; what new habits, to attain; and, in short, what a completely new life they will have to lead; if they embrace the true Gospel, as they profess to do. At present, they are perhaps eager for doctrine; not understanding, if the doctrine be sound, how vast must be the change of practice. They fail, when a question arises respecting this, or the other, point of Christian conduct; and perhaps, are now led so to interpret doctrine, or so to confine themselves to it under a shew of zeal for doctrinal truth, as to justify, or at least, in some degree to palliate, the lamentable deficiencies of their own temper and life.

This class of persons, therefore, like many of CHRIST'S hearers of old, may be compared to those, who begin to build a tower, but are not able to finish. For here, undoubtedly, is the difficulty of the present day. It lies, not in hearing, as some seem to suppose, nor in agreeing to what is heard: it consists, not in adopting the very same sentiments with the preacher, and in following him with eagerness, as the multitude followed CHRIST. The difficulty is *in doing*. It consists both in receiving the doctrines practically, for that is the true way of believing them; and also in following them up into all their proper consequences, in our own actual practice. Men should take care, indeed, in the first place, that the words, which they hear, are sound words; that they are not the mere opinions of men, but the sayings of CHRIST; but let not the care to hear certain tenets supersede all other care. Unbelievers, indeed, have often reproached Christianity, for being a religion which impressed certain speculative articles of faith while, to judge by the lives of its professors, it made no very great demands, in the way of practice. CHRIST however, has given no ground for this observation of the unbelievers. He has not been defective in urging practical duties: witness almost every part of His Sermon on the Mount.

We say, indeed, that doctrine also is most important

but, then, we also say, that doctrine rightly received is the sure and only foundation of all good practice. Let every zealot for doctrine, then, remember, that there is something new *to be done*, in consequence of every new truth, which he receives; and that every doctrine, every precept, every mystery even of our faith, has its practical tendency, and its proper practical use. The preaching of modern ministers should, like that of CHRIST to the multitude, be so far practical as to have an evident tendency to convert men from their present practice; or, if they have, in the main, been already thus converted, to make them still go on, examining and improving their practice, in a thousand particulars. The ear to hear the minister should be a consequence of having a desire of this practical amendment in the heart.

XLVIII.

ST. MATTHEW, VII. 24—29.

SAME SUBJECT.—PART III.

IN continuing the subject of these verses; it must be borne in mind, that there is another large class, who have another way of deceiving themselves: they are practical in their ideas, both of morality and religion, and they take great credit for being so. But their sayings are not the sayings of CHRIST; they are the sayings rather of the heathen moralist, or of the prudent man of this world: their morality does not amount to Christian morality; nor their practice, to Christian practice. It may be useful to call to the recollection of such persons those Christian precepts which are contained in the Sermon on the Mount; and to point out, in what manner a truly practical hearer of those

sayings of our LORD would be likely to meditate upon them.

"I perceive," he would say to himself, "that this new Prophet, who is come into the world, and has been working so many miracles, in proof of his Messiahship, delivers a far different doctrine from that to which we, Jews, have been accustomed. How many new truths have been taught us. truths also, which He declares, that we must reduce to practice; for the conclusion of His Sermon has been one continued warning, that *we are not His real disciples, unless we do the things which He hath commanded.* I pecreive, that the poverty of spirit, of which He hath spoken, must be truly felt by me; that I must also know, what it is to hunger and thirst after righteousness; that I must become meek and peaceable; that I must be content to be very serious, and even to mourn for a while, if I may but be comforted hereafter; that I must acquire a disposition to show mercy, to forgive injuries, to love even my enemies; and patiently to bear such provocations as may be offered to me. I find, that I must also lend, and give away my substance, with a large and liberal spirit. I learn, that I am no longer to do any thing, to be seen of men; and that the whole fabric of my superficial and external virtue, which had been chiefly founded on a regard to character with my fellow creatures, must be pulled down, in order that it may be succeeded by a principle of real purity in my very heart. How utterly have I mistaken that law of GOD, to which I had been fancying that I paid obedience.

"I now understand, that the law requires me, not only not to kill, but not to be so much as angry, without a cause:—not on not to perjure myself, but not even to use an expression which implies want of reverence towards GOD; not only not to commit adultery, but not to indulge an unchaste idea, in my imagination. I find, also, that, if I become a follower of this JESUS, I am to expect persecution for righteousness' sake. I have been informed that my prayers, instead of being offered up, only or chiefly, in public, and consisting of vain repetitions,

must be put up daily in my secret chamber, and out of a pure and forgiving heart, for the pardon of my sins, and for the supply of the perpetually returning wants—both of my body, and of my soul. By this heavenly teacher I have also been instructed, that I must no longer lay up treasure in this world; and that, if I hope to have a treasure in heaven, my heart must be there also: that, so elevated must be my mind above earthly things, that I must lay aside all that multitude of anxieties by which I have been troubled; that I must not be careful even for my necessary food and clothing; nor for any of the things of this mortal life; but that I must acquire a new calmness, and resignation, as to all the events of this world, whether prosperous or adverse; seeking, first, the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness; and quietly trusting, that, the greater blessings being obtained, all other things, which are really needful for the body, will be added unto me.

"Moreover, that disposition, which I have had, to judge others, must now, as I perceive, be exchanged for a disposition to judge myself. To do, also, to others, as I would they should do unto me, must, henceforth, be the great rule of my life. How exalted is that purity to which I am called:—I am to be a light of the world:—I am to be as a city set on a hill:—I am to be that salt, which is to season the whole earth. I am to be one of only a little flock: for strait, I am assured, is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it. But how," he would likewise add, "shall I ever be sufficient for these things? Do thou, O my SAVIOUR, still direct and teach me. Do thou also sustain and comfort me. To whom shall I go, but unto Thee; for Thou hast the words of eternal life? Already Thou hast opened mine eyes, in some measure, to see both my past sinfulness, and my further duty. Pardon, O LORD, all that is past. Show me more clearly that way, by which I may be forgiven; and instruct me whence I may gather strength to perform those great things, which Thou requirest of me."

In some such manner as this, would the practical hearer apply the Sermon on the Mount, and meditate upon it. Such an one would continue to be found among the followers of CHRIST; his faith might fail for a time, like that of the Apostles at the trying period of the crucifixion; yet he would afterwards be numbered among the hearers of the Apostles, and among the multitude, that met together on the Day of Pentecost. This man would also be of the number of that infant Church, which continued stedfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. I add, that he would also be one of those persons to whom the Epistles, now extant, are addressed: he would be one of the saints, the called, the sanctified in CHRIST JESUS. He would be a serious and earnest reader of those epistles; and a partaker of that excellent spirit with which they are written.

It is unnecessary, after giving this description, to draw a second picture of the serious and practical hearer, or reader, of the same Sermon on the Mount, who lives at the present day.

Suffice it, generally, to remark, that such an one will partake in all the same feelings, with the man whom we have just described; and also will unquestionably be disposed, in like manner, to attend not to this Sermon only, but to all the other words, both of CHRIST, and of His Apostles.

This point is here particularly mentioned, by way of reply to those who profess to draw the whole of their religion, from the Sermon on the Mount; assuming that all which is material in Christianity, must of course be found there; and forgetting that saying of CHRIST Himself to His disciples, at a period subsequent to this,—"I have yet many things to say unto you: but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth:—He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."*

* St John xvi. 12—14.

The serious and practical hearer of the present day will, therefore, add—to the precepts given in the Sermon on the Mount—all the other precepts of his Bible: and, to the whole preceptive part of it, he will add all that is doctrinal. Alarmed by those declarations of the spirituality and strictness of the divine law, which the Sermon on the Mount furnishes, he will receive with joy that soul-reviving truth, that "GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."* And that "by Him, all, that believe, are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses;"† for it is unquestionably one end of that searching discourse of CHRIST to prepare the mind for these doctrines.

Filled also, with a sense both of his own weakness, and of the high nature of that holiness, to which (as the same Sermon shows) it is absolutely necessary that he should attain, how earnestly will he now seek by prayer the help of GOD'S Holy Spirit. He will put on the whole armour of GOD: he will search, through all parts of Scripture, for every thing which can contribute to make him wise unto salvation; he will attend in an especial manner to the affecting history of his SAVIOUR'S death, and to the doctrines resulting out of it; nor will he lightly esteem the writings of those apostles, whom CHRIST sent forth for the express purpose of evangelizing the nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.

This, then is the man, who builds his house upon a rock. His is a religion which shall never disappoint him. It is no baseless fabric, which shall be overthrown by the first rising storm. This man, if affliction and trouble should fall upon him, shall find the consolations of CHRIST dwelling in him: if persecutions should come upon him, because of the word, he shall not be offended: if death should draw near, he shall face that king of terrors: and, when the

* 2 Cor. v 19. † Acts xiii. 39.

Day of Judgment shall arrive, he shall be counted worthy to escape all those things which are coming on the earth, and to stand before the Son of Man: for he has not been a mere hearer of the word, but a doer of it. His faith in CHRIST has not been that faith which is without works, and which is dead, being alone; but it has been proved to have been true faith, by its fruits. His confession of sin has not been confession of the lip; but the real language of an humble, broken, and contrite heart: his love to his SAVIOUR has not consisted in saying "LORD, LORD;" but in doing the things which He hath commanded.

Being, therefore, thus safe, for life, for death, and for eternity, he may be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock: and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not; for it was founded on a rock.

"But whosoever heareth these sayings of mine," says CHRIST, "and doeth them not, I will liken him unto a foolish man, that built his house on the sand." It matters not what profession such a man has made; what doctrine he has heard; or what preacher he has followed. Only to hear even the best doctrine is not to build on the right foundation. His house is upon the sand: the religion of such an one is a slight and unsubstantial thing. It will not abide the test, when the storm comes, which is to try it: and there is a time approaching, when every one's building shall be tried. That fair edifice, with which he had for a while pleased himself, shall fail. All his high hopes and confidences shall be thrown down. The house, which he had reared to himself for eternity, shall fall; for he had built it on the sand: and great shall be the fall thereof.

THE END.

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